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Agribusiness

Magazine

IS YOUR **SOIL** READY FOR THE **CHALLENGE?**

MANAGING RISK IN FARMING: TYPES OF RISKS

QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL FARM MANAGER

TIPS FOR GROWING OPEN FIELD TOMATOES IN WINTER

MANAGING POULTRY LAYERS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

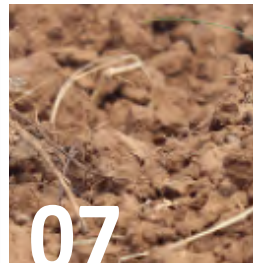
FACTORS AFFECTING LOW EGG PRODUCTION AND QUALITY

GREENHOUSE TOMATO PRODUCTION GUIDE





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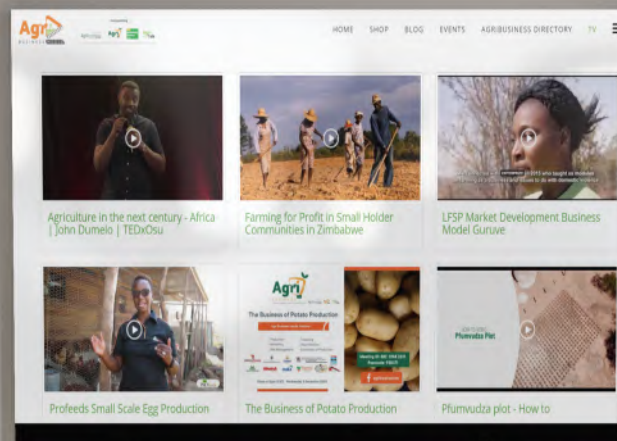
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Managing risk in farming: Types of risks

by Takudzwa Maponga

Agricultural production is at risk from many potential factors, including: weather, diseases, market prices and input prices. Risk management is one tool that you can use to protect your investment.

What is Risk?

The term refers to “the possibility of a

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loss”. Risk can not be eliminated but it can be managed to reduce its negative impact. Managing risk involves deciding which risks to accept, which risk to control and which risk to avoid. Risk manage-

ment involves choosing among alternatives that reduce financial effects that can result from such uncertainties.

The risks of farming

As a farmer you make decisions every day that affect farming operations. Most of the factors that affect the decisions you make



cannot be predicted with 100% accuracy and this is risk. Farmers need to understand risk and have risk management skills to better anticipate problems and reduce consequences. There are many sources of risks in farming and the common sources of risk in farming can be divided into five areas:

- Production Risk
- Marketing Risk
- Financial Risk
- Institutional Risk
- Human Risk

Production and technical risk

Production risks relate to the possibility that your yield or output levels will be lower than projected.

Crop and livestock performance depend on biological processes that are affected by the weather, and by pests and diseases.

Excessive rainfall or too little rainfall leads to lower or no yield in extreme cases. Hail or heavy windstorms could damage or even wipe out crops. Outbreaks of pests or diseases could

also cause major yield losses in crops and livestock. Production risks may also result from damage due to failure of equipment and machinery such as an irrigation pump. Fire is also one of the most common risks that cause serious losses in farming.

Marketing Risks

Marketing risks relate to the possibility that you will lose the market for your products or that the price received will be less than expected. Lower sales and prices due to increased numbers of competing growers or changing consumer preferences are common sources of marketing risk. Marketing risks can also arise from loss of market access due to a wholesale buyer or processor relocating or closing, or if a product fails to meet market standards or packaging requirements.

Financial Risks

Financial risks relate to a scenario of not having sufficient cash to meet expected obligations, generating lower than expected profits and losing equity in

the farm. Sources of financial risk commonly result from production and marketing risks. In addition, financial risks may also be caused by increased input costs, higher interest rates, excessive borrowing, higher cash demand for family needs, lack of adequate cash or credit reserves and unfavorable changes in exchange rates.

Legal and Environmental Risks

In part, legal risks relate to fulfilling business agreements and contracts. Failure to meet these agreements often carry a high cost. Major source of legal risk is tort liability causing injury to another person or property due to negligence. Legal risk is closely related to environmental liability and concerns about water quality, erosion and pesticide use.

Human Resource Management Risks

Human resource risks pertain to risks associated with individuals and their relationships to each other. Key sources of human resource risk arise from one of the

“three D’s” — divorce, death, or disability. The impact of any of these events can be devastating to a farm. Human resource risks also include the negative impacts arising from a lack of people management skills and poor communications.

Risk management

Decision-making is the principal activity of management. The following practices need to be followed to manage production risks:

- Purchase crop or livestock insurance coverage to stabilize income. The simplest way to manage risks!
- Diversify enterprises by growing different

crop varieties and completely new crops.

- Expand production through more intensive growing practices or by planting more acreage.
- Adopt risk mitigating practices such as drip irrigation, tile drainage, trap crops or resistant varieties.
- Consider site selection - use fields less susceptible to frost or pests and rotate crops.
- Maintain equipment and keep facilities in good working condition.
- Keep farm records

In the **next article** we look at strategies that can be used to manage risk.

Read more

<http://www.fao.org/3/i8656EN/i8656en.pdf>
<https://www.oldmutual.co.za/business/goals/run/agriplus>
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-practices-management/risk-management/risk-in-agriculture>

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IS YOUR SOIL UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

With mounting pressure to produce food, feed and even fuel for an increasing population, farm businesses are now asking more from the soil. Soil health, or the capacity of the soil to function, is now critical to the sustainability of farm businesses. The key starting point in tackling this challenge is soil testing.

Soil testing

The introduction of high yielding varieties has resulted in increased demand for nutrients which cannot

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be achieved from the inherent soil fertility.

Inputs such as fertilizer must be used to get optimum yields. The cost of such inputs is prohibitive while their rational use is imperative. There is need for soil testing and analysis to determine nutritional requirements for maximum productivity of a given crop. Many crop farmers neglect this important pre-farming activity which affects the total farm output. It is an essential tool

in assessing soil fertility, suitable crops and fertilizer requirements. When done regularly, it also assesses the extent to which farm activities are affecting soil fertility. The potential for increased yields and profits has been the obvious motivator for the keen interest in soil testing.

Fertilizers are the major cost driver in the production of most crops. The aim is to maximize marketable yields and not to harm the environment, which usually

....continued on page 9

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"When accuracy matters"



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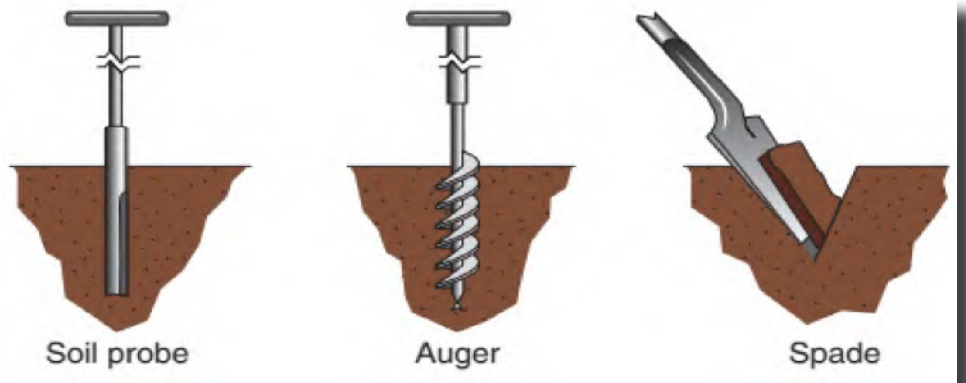
is a result of excessive use. Blind use of fertiliser can also lead to inefficiency and unnecessary production costs. A soil testing program is a valuable tool in determining efficient and economic crop production.

Chemical soil analysis determines the content of basic plant nutrients; nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P₂O₅), potassium (K₂O), pH, humus content, total CaCO₃, available lime, organic matter, total sulphur (S), trace elements, and other physical characteristics (capacity, permeability, density, pH – value)

Why is Soil Testing Important?

Soil testing is the best way to assess soil fertility. It helps you to make important farm decisions on what to grow and soil correctional measures required for maximum crop production. Soil testing is important in the following key areas:

- Optimizes crop production. Soil testing allows for determining the macro and micro-nutrient requirements of your crop. Applying too little fertilizer



results in low yield whereas high yields can be obtained when adequate fertilizer is applied. Soil testing measures soil acidity and alkalinity usually known as soil pH.

- Reduces contamination by leaching of excess fertilisers.
- Reduces production costs by limiting fertiliser applied to only what is required by the plant
- Helps in decision making.

What is soil pH?

Soil pH can be viewed as an abbreviation for Power of concentration of Hydrogen ions in a solution. The pH of a soil is a measure of hydrogen ion activity or concentration ($[H^+]$) in the soil solution. As the H^+ activity increases, soil pH decreases. As the soil pH decreases, most desirable crop nutrients become less

available while others, often undesirable, become more available and can reach toxic levels.

From the table above one unit decrease in pH implies 10 times increase in acidity. A soil with a pH of 5.0 is 10 times more acid than a soil with a pH of 6.0 and 100 (10×10) times more acid than a soil with pH 7.0

What are the steps involved?

1. Soil sampling
2. Soil testing/ Analysis
3. Interpretation
4. Implementation

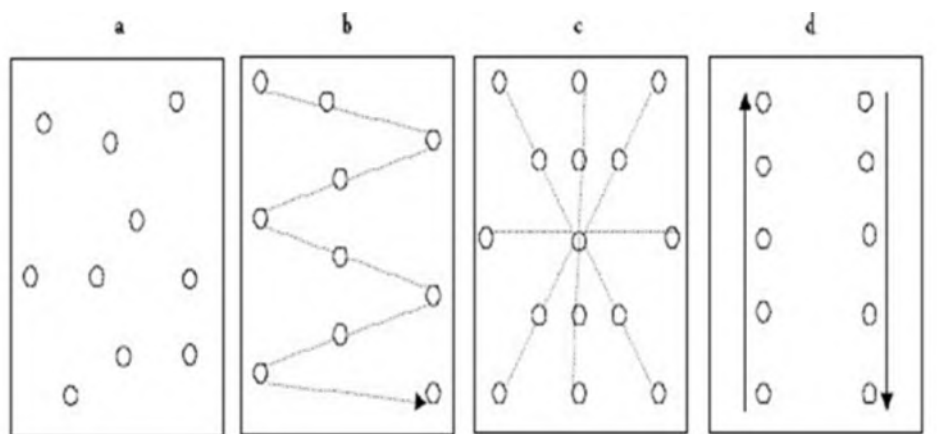
Soil sampling

Soil sample is the first and foremost component of soil testing that decides ultimate

Tools that can be used to collect soil samples

value of the service to the farmers. As a small amount of soil in the form of sample represents the entire delineated area, a poor soil sample becomes the primary source of error in soil testing and interpretation of results for nutrient recommendation or any other intended purposes. The following are points to consider when taking samples:

- Taking soil samples for analysis is done after harvesting of crops and before any fertilizing, at optimum soil moisture.
- The soil samples should be true representative of the whole land.
- Divide the land into similar areas depending on their colour of soil or past management practices with respect to liming, fertilizing or cropping.
- The best time for sampling is after the rains and when the soil has dried out e.g. April and May.
- A minimum of about twenty sub samples should be taken with a trowel for each demarcated area. Each sub-sample should be trowel full of soil to a brush of litter or loose soil on the surface.
- A sample is taken to a depth of normal tillage i.e., to rooting of plants, for field crops 0-30 cm, for permanent crops (orchards and vineyards) 0-30cm and 30-60cm.
- Samples must be taken at regular intervals of between 10-20m apart in the field.
- The sub-samples from the same area should be placed in a clean container free from contamination and thoroughly mixed.
- The resultant mixture should be spread on a clean sheet of paper, air dried and divided into 4 equal parts.
- Small portions of soil should be taken from each quarter until about 1-2kgs of soil has been obtained. This represent the composite soil sample that should be placed in a khaki bag or soil carton but not in plastic bag.
- Each composite sample should be clearly labelled and if possible, the farmer should draw a sketch map of each land indicating from where the samples were taken.
- Unusual areas such as those in the vicinity of termite mounds, drains, wet spots and contour ridges must be avoided.
- The accuracy of soil analysis will depend on the thoroughness of the sampling technique.
- A complete history of land i.e. virgin land, fallow or riveted, density of cover and whether incorporated or burnt off, time of ploughing, past fertilizer history including liming must be submitted with each sample so that the soil testing laboratory can provide more reliable report.



Soil sampling methods.

Soil analysis

Soil testing is a time-test-

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"When accuracy matters"



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ed tool for soil fertility evaluation and monitoring. It also helps restoration of depleted soils by offering soil-test based recommendations on plant nutrients and amendments. Soil testing operates on the principle of probability, meaning, if all other factors of productivity are at the optimum, there is high probability to obtain more profitable response to applied nutrients based on soil testing than to those applied on ad hoc basis. So far, the results have been impressive, provided the recommendations are formulated suiting the specific crops grown.

After collecting your samples, you bring them to ZIMLABS laboratory where you fill in the attached form for submission together with your samples.

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as Mr Bake,
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ZIMLABS explains
more on soil
testing*



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Qualities of a successful farm manager

Agritalk

Farm managers are responsible for the daily planning, organisation, supervision and administration of farm business activities.

In this article, we look at qualities that make a successful farm manager.

Basic Knowledge & Information

Command of Basic Facts

Successful farm managers know what's happening in their business. They have a command of such basic facts as goals and plans (long and short-term), enterprise knowledge, who's

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who in the industry, the roles and relationships between various supplies and customers, and they define their own job and what's expected of them. If they don't store all this information, they know where to get it when they need it.

Relevant Professional Knowledge

This category includes 'technical' knowledge, e.g. production technology, marketing techniques, engineering knowledge, relevant legislation, sources of finance, and knowledge of basic background management principles and theories, e.g. planning,

organising and controlling.

Sensitivity to Events

Good Farm Managers vary in the degree to which they can sense what is happening in a particular situation. The successful manager is relatively sensitive to events and can tune it to what's going on around him. He is perceptive and open to information – 'hard' information, such as figures and facts, and 'soft' information, such as the feelings of other people.

The manager with this sensitivity is able to respond in an appropriate way to situations as they arise. This is especially important in family farming situations where members of the family work closely

together and for those farms with a number of employees.

Skills & Attributes

Analytical, Problem-solving, and Decision/judgement making skills

The job of the manager is very much concerned with making decisions. Sometimes these can be made using logical, optimising techniques.

Other decisions call for the ability to weigh pros and cons in what is basically a very uncertain or ambiguous situation, calling for a high level of judgment or even intuition.

The manager must therefore develop judgment-making skills, including the ability to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty, striking a balance between the necessity at times to be guided by his subjective feelings without throwing objective logic completely out of the window.

Social Skills and Abilities

One definition of management often cited is 'getting things done through other people'. This definition may be inadequate, but it does point to one of the key features of the

farm manager's job – it requires interpersonal skills. The successful farm manager develops a range of abilities which are essential in such activities; communicating, delegating, negotiating, resolving conflict, persuading, selling, using and responding to authority and power.

Even on properties with little or no employees, these skills are essential for dealing with other family members, contractors, shearing teams, agents, neighbours, etc.

Emotional Resilience

The farm manager's job involves a degree

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of emotional stress and strain, which arises as a natural consequence of working in situations involving authority, leadership, power, interpersonal conflict, meeting targets and deadlines, all within a framework of a degree of uncertainty and ambiguity.

The successful farm manager needs to be sufficiently resilient to cope with this. 'Resilient' means that he/she feels the stress (they don't become thick-skinned and insensitive) but are able to cope with it by maintaining self-control and by 'giving' to some extent, but not so much that they become permanently deformed.

Proactivity – Inclination to Respond Purposefully to Events

Effective farm managers have some purpose or goal to achieve, rather than merely responding to demand. They cannot plan everything carefully in advance and, at times, they must respond to the needs of the instant situation – but when making such a response the effective farm manager manages to consider the longer term.

They relate immediate responses to overall and longer-term aims and goals, whereas the



less successful manager responds in a relatively unthinking or uncritical way to the immediate pressure.

This category of ability also includes such qualities as seeing a task through, being dedicated and committed, having a sense of mission, and taking responsibility for things that happen rather than 'passing the buck' to someone else or blaming aspects out of their control e.g.. weather, government, banks.

Learning Culture

Creativity

By 'creativity' we mean the ability to come up with unique new responses to situations, and to have the insight to recognise and take up

useful new approaches. It involves not only having new ideas oneself, but also the ability to recognise a good idea when it is presented from another source.

Mental Agility

Although related to general intelligence level, the concept of 'mental agility' includes the ability to grasp problems quickly, to think of several things at once, to switch rapidly from one problem or situation to another, to see quickly the whole situation (rather than ponderously plough through all its components), and to 'think on one's feet'.

Given the hectic nature of farm management work these are particularly necessary qualities for success.

Balanced Learning Habits and Skills

Data collected by observing and interviewing farm managers show that a significant proportion of the degree of their success can be explained by the presence or absence of habits and skills related to learning.

Successful managers are more independent as learners; they take responsibility for the 'rightness' of what is learned, rather than depending, passively and uncritically, on an authority figure (a teacher or an expert) to define 'truths'.

Successful managers are capable of abstract thinking as well as concrete, practical thought. They are able to relate concrete ideas to abstract ones (and vice versa) relatively quickly. This ability – which is sometimes known as a 'helicopter mind' – enables the manager to generate their own theories from practice, and to develop their own practical ideas from theory.

The ability to use a range of different learning processes is necessary for farm managerial success. Three such processes are:

Input – receiving expository teaching, either formal (e.g. on a course)



or informal (e.g. teaching by a colleague or adviser or mentor);

Discovery – generating personal meaning from one's own experiences; Reflection – a process of analysing and re-organising pre-existing experience and ideas.

Successful farm managers are more likely to have a relatively wide view of the nature of the skills of management.

For example, they are more likely to recognise the range of managerial attributes as presented in this model, than to believe that management is a unitary activity, involving, for example, dealing with subordinates (ie. needing only a certain set of social skills) or simply involving basic decision making.

Self – Knowledge

Whatever the farm manager does is in some way affected by their own view of their position, their role and by their goals, values, feelings, strengths, weaknesses and a host of other personal or 'self' factors.

If then, a manager is to retain a relatively high degree of self-control over their actions, they must be aware of these self-attributes and of the part they are playing in determining their behaviour. The successful farm manager must therefore develop skills of introspection.

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The success of your farm business is hinged on the manager's ability to perform his/ her duties.



Greenhouse Tomato Production Guide

Prime Seedco

Varieties

This first step in tomato production is generally determined by market requirements, i.e. size, truss, shelf life and marketers will need to be consulted before you make your decision.

Any variety chosen should ideally be an indeterminate type which means the plants will continue growing indefinitely as long as pests and diseases are kept to a minimum and they have an adequate nutrient supply. The bush or determinate type of tomatoes, traditionally grown outdoors, are not recommended for growing in tunnels. Indeterminate varieties can last up to 8 months in a greenhouse.

More Information

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Seed Co recommends long shelf life tomatoes because they reduce losses incurred by growers, supermarkets, hawkers, wholesalers etc. Long shelf tomatoes are a must for most populations.

Seed Co indeterminate tomato hybrids Oasis, Alambra and Candela meet the yield and quality requirements of the Zimbabwean market.

Seedlings

Seedlings used for transplanting in tunnels must be strong, healthy and free from virus and diseases. Seed planted during winter months will

take a minimum of 8 weeks before transplanting and those in summer months will take 5-6 weeks before they are ready for transplanting. Timing of planting is determined by when the highest prices are achieved on the fresh market. (In general, it takes 10-12 weeks from transplanting to first harvest). As soon as seedlings are 12-15cm tall they are ready for transplanting.

There are several different options that may be used such as pine shavings (NOT sawdust or pine bark).

The most commonly used growing media is pine bark. It is a good inert media that provides adequate


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 **MASSEY FERGUSON**

....continued from page 19

aeration and due to the composting process is free of diseases.

- Pre-enrichment of pine bark.
- Per one m3 of 12mm pine bark (15 x 66-liter bags add the following: -
- 1 kg gypsum
- 0,88kg single super phosphate
- 2 kg calcitic lime

Containers

Tomatoes may be grown in a variety of different containers. The ones most popular are the black grow bags (10-15 liter) and sausages. Order them without holes and then perforate at 1.5" above the ground.

This acts as a reservoir in case of electricity interruptions or other delays in irrigation. This is a tube of black plastic of 150-200 micron thick and diameter of 37cm.

Cut into 2,1m lengths and tie at one end. Pine bark must be well compacted into the bag before tying the other end and cutting the planting holes. Seedling holes cut every 40cm apart using a jam tin will give 5 plants/ sausage.

Drainage holes must be placed 1 1/2" from the ground using a pencil or wire. These holes should only be inserted on one side of the sausage which then drains into a furrow. This prevents the pathways becoming flooded and reduces the clean-up operation required to mop up stagnant water.

Planting

The growing media should be well irrigated with stage 1 nutrient solution prior to planting in the bags. The twine should be planted under the seedlings where the



Greenhouse Tomatoes Guide

Stage	Nursery	Transplanting	Vegetative	First Flowers	First Fruits	Fruiting
Days:	0-35	28-36	30-60	60-65	65-70	70-125
Pest Problems						
matodes		Soligo				
Pests & Aphids		Actara Soil Drench / Soligo				
worms		Karate Zeon				
miner		Trigard / Dynamac				
Spider Mites			Dynamac / Polo / Curacron			
eworm & Caterpillars				Ampago / Match / Karate Zeon / Proclaim		
ids & Whitefly		Actara Soil Drench		Actara / Ampago / Polo/Polo		
Disease Problems						
mping off	Apron Star Seed Dress					
terial Complex		Bion / Cooper Oxycarbide				
ly Blight		Copper, Deychloride / Bravo / Amistar Top				
l Blight				Folio Gold / Revus / Ridomil Gold		
spots; Powdery						
ew						
is Complex	Actara Soil Drench / Dia					
Weed Problems	Below are off-label suggestions; grower must do own tests for crop damage.					
ore planting - post	Toumax					
urgence perennials	Toumax					
ore planting - post	Toumax / Toublon					
urgence annuals						
-emergence: grasses		Flux Mequron				
-emergence: grasses				Fluxite Pine		
-emergence: grasses						
-emergence: broadleaf		Fluxit Gold				

Spray guide

roots will soon anchor it down.

This is not necessary in the case of the sausages where twine can be tied around the bag. Plant spacing in row is 40cm with 60cm between double rows. The pathway between double rows varies between 1,3 – 1,6m. In an 8m wide greenhouse the maximum number of rows is 8 (4 double rows).

Fertilizer

Growing tomatoes in a soilless media requires greater management than those grown in soil. There is very little mar-

gin for error as there is no clay portion to act as a buffer or store for residual nutrients. An essential management tool is an EC meter which gives the grower an indication of fertilizer going into the bag and a measure of how much is coming out in the leachate.

Every time water is applied it must contain fertilizer. Before giving a fertilizer recommendation it is important that the irrigation water is analyzed. A good laboratory to use is Analytical Laboratories 11A Downing Road, Greendale, Harare.

Fertilization is split into 2 stages: -

Stage 1: Planting to 3rd flowering truss.

Stage 2: Third flowering truss onwards.

Regular sprays of calcium nitrate @ 10g per liter to prevent blossom end rot will also be necessary.

These solutions can be made up from water soluble products obtainable from horticultural outlets. The micronutrients are supplied in a pre-mixed state called Omnispoor @ 20g/1000 liters.

Concentrated stock solutions must be made up in separate tanks as



calcium cannot be mixed with phosphates and sulphates.

Electrical Conductivity (EC)

The EC of the fertigation solution must be checked regularly in order to monitor the fertilizer going onto the plants is correct and that there has not been a mistake in making up of stock solutions.

When the leachate EC is 0,2 of a unit higher than fertigation EC, then the fertilizer must be reduced by 20%. If the leachate EC is 0,2 lower

than the fertilizer must be increased by 20%.

Irrigation

There are numerous irrigation designs that may be used but the only container that lends itself to using drip tape is the sausage. The system must be able to give the plants 2,5–3 liters per day at maximum production in summer. Young plants will use 300-500mls per day. This is usually applied in two applications. As the demand for water increases so the number of applications per day will also increase.

Water usage by the

Always follow Good Agronomic Practices

plants is monitored by collecting the amount of leachate draining from the bag. The minimum quantity of leachate should be 10% of the water given to the plant. A maximum of 20% emittance is required to prevent loss of expensive fertilizer, e.g. if 500mls is applied to each plant then the quantity of leachate should be 50-100 mls.

Sanitation

This is vitally important in order to maintain a healthy crop for a long period of time. Simple measures may be put in place to prevent devastation of a crop by virus and diseases. A selection of different chemicals may be used such as Sodium Hypochlorite, Sporekill and Terminator.

Personnel from Cernol Chemicals give good advice on rates and selection of chemicals.

Removal of leaves/fruit
It is important to remove leaves at the bottom of the plant as they interrupt the flow of air and are a source of infection by Botrytis. The removals should be done on a fortnightly basis and not more than 2 leaves

at a time to be removed. When the first cluster shows signs of ripening, the leaves may be removed right up to the cluster. There should always be 1,5m of healthy, functioning leaves on the plant.

Some varieties of tomatoes may produce many flowers per truss. It is important to prune small fruit to maintain size and quality of the remaining tomatoes.

In truss tomatoes such as Ikram, normally fruit are pruned to 6 tomatoes per truss.

Pollination

Bee activity in tunnels is restricted so mechanical pollination is required. This can easily be done twice a day by tapping the overhead wire along its length. It's important not to try and pollinate too early in the morning as pollination does not readily occur below 20° C.

Picking and Post-Harvest Handling

Tomatoes should be picked when the bottom tip of the fruit have turned orange pink. The fruit will then turn light

red in 2-3 days. In summer, picking will be 2 or 3 times a week but only once a week in winter. Picking should be done in the cool of the day and the tomatoes then stored at cool temperatures.

Temperatures below 7°C can result in poor fruit quality with a short shelf life.

| Prime SeedCo



Tips for Growing Open field Tomatoes in Winter

Tomato is an important and widely grown vegetable across the country.

Tomato is one of summer's most-loved vegetables. It is a warm season crop growing best in summer, but it can also be grown in winter provided the right precautions such as under green house conditions.

The following tips may help if you want to try openfield tomatoes in winter.

NB. Always invest in a greenhouse facility as tomatoes are affected by frost. These are just tips with no guaranteed results.

Select a good site

Select areas which are not prone to frost. Cold air is denser than warm air, so

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it moves downhill, settling down the valley, in low-lying depressions or hollows. Do not plant crops that are prone to frost in the valley floor. Slopes are good sites for planting crops sensitive to frost because as warm air moves up it warms the area on the slope. And land that slopes towards the morning sun is better in frost prone areas than land facing away from the sun.

Irrigating

Sprinkler irrigation also protects plants from frost. The irrigation water freezes in the low night temperatures. As the water freezes it releases heat which warms the plant cells and reduces the chance of

plants freezing. However, sprinkler irrigation can increase the incidence of foliar diseases in tomatoes.

Mulching and grass fences

Cover plants with grass, newspaper, or plastic to trap warm air around the plant. The covering must be secure so that it is not blown off by wind, and must be removed during the day to allow the sun's rays to reach the soil. A grass fence one metre high erected around individual plants or beds also offers protection against frost.

What other farmers are doing

Francis fills cooking oil or milk bottles with water until they are three quarters full. While the plants are still young, he places

....continued on page 25

the bottles upright on the ground among the tomatoes. He places one bottle beside every third plant in every other row. He makes sure that the neck of the bottle appears above the plants. When the plants get taller than the bottles he places stakes beside the tomato plants. He hangs a bottle on each stake with a string. The bottles hang 10 centimetres above the plants.

When the temperature drops below freezing the water in the bottles freezes. The tomatoes stay frost free even though the surrounding grass and shrubs are covered with frost.





Managing poultry layers: What you should know

C. Ndavambi | Windmill

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Introduction

Many years of genetic research have resulted in the production of docile, colour-sexable, brown egg-layer birds with excellent feed efficiency and good liveability, producing superior high quality brown eggs.

The use of sound poultry husbandry and management practices; properly controlled feeding to regulate body weight and careful adherence to lighting recommendations and good sanitation will help attain a high degree of the genetic potential of these improved egg-type breeds.

Rearing replacement pullets

The physical condition of the pullet at the time of sexual maturity may determine its productivity during the laying period which usually lasts for about a year. Most producers rear their own pullets from day old stage until the point of lay. This allows the producer to plan the periodic replacement of his laying stock with birds that have been raised under their own standards of housing and management. Other producers may specialise in raising pullets and then sell them off when they

reach point of lay.

Pullets are reared almost exclusively using the deep litter system. Their feeding program should be carefully managed so that they do not gain weight excessively and reach sexual maturity prematurely. This would result in reduced egg production during the laying year. The nutrient requirements of growing pullets are shown in Table 6. Rations can be formulated on farm (which is the cheaper option) or purchased from commercial stockfeed manufacturers.

One way of controlling growth rate is by practicing feed restriction. This is done a number of ways; the first and most common method is to give

a known amount of feed once in two days – skip-a-day feeding regime. The other method is to lower the protein content in a feed so that consumption is reduced and growth slowed. The latter method has the disadvantage that birds tend to overeat to compensate for nutrient deficiencies.

Age in weeks	Live weight in grams	Est. cum. feed intake and feed type
1 to 4	285	600 g Chick Starter Mash
5 to 8	620	1800 g Chick Starter Mash
9 to 12	960	3400 g Layer Grower Mash
13 to 18	1460	6500 g Layer Grower Mash

Vaccination programme for pullets

The vaccination program for pullets varies between places and is based on the disease situation in the area. A veterinarian should be consulted in order to formulate a vaccination program which is adapted to the local disease situation.

De-beaking

Proper de-beaking can reduce feed wastage and it can also minimise vices such as feather picking, vent pecking, bullying, cannibalism and egg eating. De-beaking is done at 6 to 10 days of age and, or repeated between 8 to 12 weeks if need be. About one-half of both the upper and the lower beak is removed and cauterised using a cherry red

hot blade on a de-beaking machine. Always provide water-soluble vitamins and minerals a few days prior to the de-beaking and for a week afterwards to help eliminate stress and allow faster healing.

Lighting for replacement pullets

Light intensity, the length of the day light period and the pattern of daily change produce biological responses associated with egg production in layers. Decreasing day length during rearing will delay onset of laying, while increasing day length will hasten sexual maturity and the onset of laying. Sexual maturity or egg production generally depends on the following (i) minimum age 18 weeks which is determined genetically, (ii) a minimum body weight, (iii) a nutrient intake to support egg production and (iv) a constant or increasing day-length of more than 12 hours. This light stimulation can be provided artificially when the minimum weight (Approx 1.5 kg) has been achieved.

In Zimbabwe, if the pullets are raised to reach point-of-lay in winter (June/July), then they are in-season flock as the natural day-length will be naturally decreasing during period. However, if the pullets are raised when the natural day-length is increasing, say from July to December, they the flock is out of season, and the most practical way is to use the open type housing for rearing pullets.

Others to be factors concerning lighting are:

- Keep the light bulbs clean,
- Do not expose the birds to direct sunlight,
- Replace faulty lamps regularly, and
- A light source with a clean reflector is better than one without a reflector.

Feeding Management for Layer birds

It is assumed that layers, unlike birds raised specifically for meat, regulate their feed intake. Layers are generally reared on

The average target live weights and cumulative feed intake for rearing pullets

full feed (ad libitum).

Amounts vary between 120 and 135 grams of feed per bird per day (or 45 kg /bird / year) depending on genetics, type of laying facility, age of stock and environmental conditions.



Under large commercial set-ups, the feed is offered to birds via the chain system. The chain system transports feed into the metal feeder at precise times during the day. In general, 2 inches of feeder space is allotted per pullet and 2.5 inches or more for each adult laying hen. Table 6 illustrates the dietary protein and energy recommendations and feed requirements based on age in of typical layer. Young birds are fed a high protein diet (20 percent) during the first few weeks of life.

This level continuously decreases until it reaches approximately 12 to 15 percent proteins during egg production. In addi-

tion to monitoring dietary protein, producers must closely examine other ingredients. During the laying phase, lysine, methionine, calcium, and phosphorus are precisely monitored to support maximum egg production. Once egg production begins, energy intake is the critical factor controlling egg numbers. Therefore, the diet must contain an adequate concentration of calories if small birds are going to be expected to perform to their full genetic potential at peak and as the laying cycle continues. Feed should be blended for a few days during change-over from one phase to next in order to allow smooth transition and to avoid upsetting the birds' digesting system.

If greater egg profits are to be realized during an entire laying cycle, it is essential that replacement pullets attain proper body weight. Note that light breeds reach point-of-lay earlier (20 weeks) than heavier breeds (22 weeks). A bird that remains small will lay small eggs at the onset of egg laying. Once egg production begins, it is too late to correct body weight problems in a flock. The smaller birds will remain small and the larger birds will remain large throughout the laying cycle. Since feed intake is correlated with body weight increases, the decreased egg size often seen in some young flocks is most likely a result of feed intake.

Egg producers will nor-

mally attempt to get the largest number of high-quality eggs of the correct size from each hen housed in the shortest period of time at the lowest cost. There are numerous feeding and management programs that have an effect on their investment. Feeding programs are designed to meet the nutritional needs of the hens. However, the profit margin is different with each type of feeding program.

Restricted feeding for pullets and layers

The feeding programme has to be adapted to the target weight-for-age and to attain a high uniformity (75 to 80 %) at point-of-lay. Limited feeding in rearing pullets is important for the following reasons: to prevent over-consumption, birds will be more docile, less stress during production, better feed utilisation, higher production and less wastage of feed. Restricted feeding during rearing is desirable but not at point



of lay. Restricted feeding can be achieved through the “skip-a-day” feeding regiment which saves feed costs by about 20 %.

If a feed restriction program is implemented, it is important to formulate the diet to supply adequate amounts of critical nutrients each day to the hen. The amino acid, vitamin and mineral concentrations in the diet are more critical with limited feeding than with full feeding. In limited feeding programs, the objective is to limit only energy without limiting the intake of critical nutrients. The use of nutrient-dense diets is necessary for a “limited every day” feeding regime. Energy intake

cannot be altered effectively by simply varying diet energy concentration. This is because, in general, the laying hen will consume the amount of feed necessary to meet her metabolisable energy requirement.

When young pullet flocks appear to have stopped their production increase or have plateaued (leveled off for several consecutive days), they will respond when “challenged” with additional feed amounts of 0.5 kg per 100 birds added to their daily feed allowance.

Laying hens fed an energy-restricted diet have a lower maintenance requirement, and a hen

consuming less feed is more efficient and profitable. If a feed restriction program is used, it is usually not started until the majority of the eggs being produced fall into the large size category. Research has shown that during the laying period, the skip-a-day birds laid the same number of eggs as the hens on a full feeding regime, but their total egg mass output was greater. Initiation of a feed restriction program should commence later for layer strains of lower body weight, particularly during periods of hot weather.



Note that during periods of stress, disease and medication, place birds on full feed. Return to controlled feeding as soon as the flock has recovered.

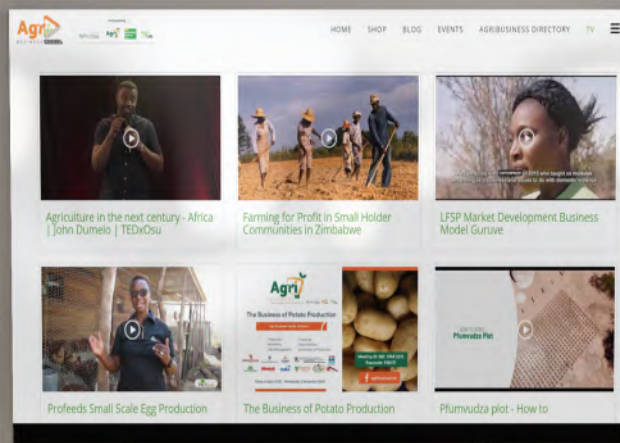
For more details please contact the Author, Claude Ndavambi on +263 772 433 496 or +263 4 334911/9 or send an email to ndavambi@windmill.co.zw.

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Meet the Farmer: Les Chapata



Factors Affecting Low Egg Production and Quality

Feed-related problems.

Diseases and bad management practices in intensive layer houses can result in a decreased number of eggs and also eggs which are abnormal in shape and colour.

Decreased egg production results in a smaller profit to farmers and less money in their pockets. Therefore, it is important to know how to prevent these factors affecting egg production.

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Not enough drinking water

Clean and cool water must always be available to avoid heat stress. Lack of water results in reduced egg production.

No feed or decreased feed intake

Chickens tend to eat less when the feed is of poor quality or when they are stressed

because of environmental temperatures, especially when it gets too hot. Feed should be available at all times.

Low calcium in the feed

This result in few and smaller eggs, soft-shelled eggs, shell-less eggs, cracked eggs, eggs losing colour and hens having leg problems.

If calcium deficiency is suspected, take a feed sample to the laboratory to check the calcium level.

Commercial rations

have calcium added. When mixing your own ration make sure that calcium added is 3.5 %. If calcium deficiency is a problem, limestone grit should be given as a top dressing at least twice a week at 5 gm/bird.

Low salt in the feed

This results in a sharp decrease in egg production.

Chickens will also start pecking each other and eating feathers.

If salt deficiency is suspected, a sample of feed should be taken to the laboratory to check the level of salt. Take care when mixing your own chicken ration at home. Add the required quantity of salt, which is 0,4 %.

Diseases

Newcastle disease (NCD)

NCD is a viral infection that can result in a mortality rate of 100 % in chickens. It also leads to a drop in egg production and quality.

Infectious bronchitis (IB)

This is a rapidly-spreading viral infection of chicken characterised by respiratory signs. It also causes drop in egg production (up to 50 %) and egg quality. Egg shells are deformed. There is a vaccine for

this disease.

Epidemic tremor

This is a viral infection that results in a drop in egg production. Layers are vaccinated on the thirteenth week of age. The vaccine is given in the drinking water.

Egg drop syndrome

This is a viral infection that affects the reproductive organs of chickens. The signs are a drop in egg production, thin shells, soft shells and shell-less eggs. There is a vaccine available to prevent the disease. Layers are vaccinated on the sixteenth week of age. The vaccine is given in the muscle.

Other diseases causing a drop in egg production are salmonellosis, mycoplasmosis, infectious laryngotracheitis and internal parasites (when the chickens are kept on the ground).

Management Problems

Lighting

Lighting is important for in-housed chickens. When the lights are off, chickens do not eat and this results in low egg production. Lights should be checked regularly and cleaned so that they do not get dimmer. Bulbs should be

changed when necessary.

Chickens should be exposed to light for a minimum of 14 hours and a maximum of 17 hours per day. Exposure to light for less than the minimum time required results in a drop in egg production.

When chickens are exposed to too much light, they reach sexual maturity at an early stage and they lay very small eggs.

Chicken Factors

Layers are usually kept for 52 weeks. After this period, they undergo a stage called moulting where they lose their feathers and stop producing eggs. Egg production will start again in the second laying period after moulting, but the eggs will be bigger, shells thinner and production lower. Older birds produce eggs with thin shells. Indigenous chickens do not lay as many eggs when compared to commercial layers.

Conclusion

When egg production and egg quality in your flock is unsatisfactory, seek help from the state or private veterinarian or animal health technician.



This is your **Agribusiness Talk - News** which highlights news from local and international media on agribusiness in Zimbabwe.

Feel free to share with friends or colleagues.

More Information

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Pfumvudza Extended to Cotton Farming

19 July 2021 | The Herald

AT least 520 000 households in the marginalised areas of the country will receive cotton inputs next season under a climate-proofed Pfumvudza agricultural cotton inputs scheme aimed at increasing production of the “white gold”.

[Read more](#)

Cannabis-Growing Gathers Momentum in Zimbabwe

9 July 2021 | VOA News

Zimbabwe recently scrapped rules requiring sole state ownership for cannabis farming to encourage investment in the plant for industrial and medicinal uses. Zimbabwe is Africa’s largest tobacco producer, but authorities expect hemp export earnings to start replacing tobacco as farmers seek higher earnings from the crop.

[Read more](#)

Young Zimbabwean woman empowered

through pig farming

12 July 2021 | The Pig Site

Armed with little capital, but much drive to improve her and her siblings’ lives, Pride Dzirutsa, a 30-year-old Zimbabwean decided to empower herself through a free-ranging pig rearing project on a farm she inherited in 2017.

[Read more](#)

Zimbabwe is a world tobacco superproducer... but farmers struggle to survive

29 June | The Africa Report

Zimbabwe is one of the largest producers of tobacco in Africa, exporting \$782m in the 2020 season. But while tobacco is making some people rich, the farmers sucked into contract farming at the bottom of the pile are losing money.

[Read more](#)

Let’s Build Pfumvudza’s Momentum Around Last Season’s Achievements

20 JULY 2021 - The Herald

THIS past week I was talking to the Manicaland crop and livestock officer, Mrs Phillipa Rwambiwa, who informed me that her province had since completed training of farmers and extension officers on proper ways of rolling out the Pfumvudza/Intwasa concept that was pivotal in the nation’s attainment of a bumper harvest last season.

[Read more](#)

‘Big lumps of protein’: Zimbabwe’s edible-insect farmer

1 Jul 2021 - AJAZEERA

“Oh, they sing! I love their sounds. I love being in a room

full of crickets,” enthuses Esnath Divasoni, her eyes sparkling behind her large glasses. Wearing a blue and green dress and black jacket with her hair tied back, she smiles over the Zoom call. “I love what I am doing and why I am doing it,” she says.

[Read more](#)

Urban Zimbabweans switch to backyard farming to survive

20 July 2020 | NEWSDAY

FURROWS of spinach vegetables stand out side-by-side with tomato plants spread out on a patch of land where 39-year-old Marilyn Nhika has had a garden over the past five years at her home in Harare.

[Read more](#)

Appetite for organic produce grows

4 JULY 2021 | Sunday Mail

ZIMBABWE’S agriculture sector has been identified as having potential to contribute more towards the growth of national exports.

[Read More](#)

Firms Make Farming Implements Parts Locally

13 JULY 2021 | The Herald

Local manufactures have started the production of farming implements worth US\$13,5 million to be used as attachments to the tractors being imported under the John Deere and Belarus facilities.

[Read more](#)

Cottco targets 150 000 tonnes

19 JULY 2021 | NEWSDAY

ZIMBABWE’S biggest cotton

dealer, Cottco, said it would nearly double volumes following a good rainfall season and export over 70% of its output. The State-run Cottco Holdings Limited whose shares were suspended from the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange about six years ago, said it was targeting 150 000 metric tonnes (mt) of cotton this year.

[Read more](#)

Fire Guts 100 Ha Maize Field, 100 Tonnes Harvested Corn

14 JULY 2021 | New Zimbabwe

The Environmental Management Agency (EMA), has penalised farmers in Zvimba North district after veld fires destroyed over 100 hectares of maize.

[Read more](#)

Muzarabani Farmers Struggle for Sesame Seed Market

24 JUNE 2021 | The Herald

For 42-year-old Mrs Lydia Mudoro of Chareka Village in Muzarabani's Ward 23 covering the Kaerezi area, growing sesame seeds as an alternative cash crop to her traditional cotton came as a welcome and strategic move.

[Read more](#)

Do mining rights take precedence over farming?

14 March 2021 | Sunday Mail

AS Zimbabwe endeavors to amend the Mines and Minerals Act [Chapter 21:05], it is important that we consider several issues in their context and the need to catch up with the ever evolving mining industry. The first area of analysis is the contentious farmer-miner relationship. There exists a complex relationship between

farming and mining, wherein most minerals are found within the heart of arable land. It would appear that there is no legislation that governs the farmer-miner relationship in relation to the competing land use, save for the Mines and Minerals Act. One is tempted to believe that the odds favour the miner.

[Read more](#)

Experts warn of tobacco re-growth

10 JULY 2021 | The Herald

Agriculture experts are worried about tobacco re-growth in many areas as this may result in the spread of pests and diseases to the new plants still in seedbeds. Tobaccos stalks should be destroyed by May 15, every year.

[Read more](#)

Small-scale farmers decry limited access to markets

11 June 2021 | The Herald

Chibuwe in Chipinge Rural District Council Ward 20 is a village, about 400 km south east of the capital city of Harare. The village is in ecological region four and relies on small holder agriculture with crops such as grains, cotton, sugar beans, ground nuts, paprika and tomatoes among the major cash crops sustaining villagers.

[Read more](#)

Unlocking value of 99-year leases

27 June 2021 | Sunday Mail

THIS article seeks to explore ways to unlock the land value especially after the land reform programme was implemented. Private financing of farmers is proving to be difficult due to the legal structure of the

99-year leases issued to new farmers.

[Read more](#)

Mechanisation needed to boost Pfumvudza

10 July 2021 | The Herald

There is need to mechanise the Pfumvudza concept to increase food production and incomes for rural people, according to 2021 Zimbabwe Rural Livelihood Assessment Report.

[Read more](#)

AMA reissues \$5bn agro-bills to buy grain

19 July 2021 | The Herald

The Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) has reissued \$5 billion worth of agro-bills, with fresh terms, under the first issue of the \$20 billion the authority intends to raise for grain purchases. AMA had announced last week when it issued the initial agro-bills that it was targeting to raise \$5 billion under the first batch.

[Read more](#)

Daring farmer reaps benefits from leap of faith

26 June 2021 | The Herald

DURING the 2017/18 farming season, a farmer from Bubi district took a leap of faith and ventured into a field that most farmers in Matabeleland region have not attempted. Mrs Teresina Sayi-Nyangari (48) saw an opportunity in a field where the majority of people and institutions in Matabeleland region have hardly dared to enter.

[Read more](#)



www.agribusiness.co.zw/magazine



Crop Planting Calendar (Zimbabwe)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Beet Root												
Brinjal (egg plant)												
Broccoli												
Butternut												
Cabbage												
Carrots												
Cauliflower												
Chillies												
Green beans												
Green mealies												
Lettuce												
Marrow (baby)												
Onion												
Peas												
Peppers												
Potato												
Squash												
Squash (germ)												
Squash (marrow)												
Tomato												
Water melon												



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The Agribusiness Expert Answers



Q

What factors should i consider when loading, transporting chickens to the market?

A

- Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress.
- Protect birds from extreme heat and cold.
- Depending on the weather conditions and inside barn environment, it could be preferable to stage loaded containers so that they are kept inside the barn until loading is near completion to protect the loaded birds from the elements.
- Close all container doors securely. Poorly secured doors may open and close during transport, injuring the birds or allowing them to escape.
- Secure containers on the truck bed with chains or bars.
- Depending on the trailer design, after every row of containers, put a bar in place. Securing and spacing containers properly allows air to circulate through the truck for ventilation.
- Keep tarps or panels available. You may need to cover the load during poor weather.
- When loading in hot weather, do not load containers tightly on the trailer. If it is cooler inside the barn, keep loaded containers in the poultry barn until the majority of the birds are loaded. Once the majority of containers are loaded with poultry, begin placing them onto the truck. Consider using portable fans if available in the barn or blowing onto the truck.
- When the final containers are on the truck, secure the entire load for transport.
- After you leave the farm, stop as little as possible until you arrive at your destination to keep the air moving through the load. Eliminating unnecessary stops on route reduces the risk of heat stress in hot weather.
- Minimize the change in environment if, during transportation, containers are to be transferred between vehicles.

Word Search

N	I	T	N	E	M	E	G	A	N	A	M	R	N
F	N	N	R	S	S	P	L	O	R	T	N	O	C
A	U	O	R	E	E	R	T	H	G	U	O	R	D
R	S	I	N	P	C	O	N	S	U	L	T	O	P
M	D	T	E	Y	I	T	S	S	T	S	T	L	E
I	E	C	A	T	R	E	I	E	O	A	A	D	F
N	C	U	N	V	P	C	E	L	R	G	D	M	F
G	I	D	S	R	O	T	C	A	F	R	I	U	O
S	S	O	L	T	N	I	D	S	I	O	S	T	R
E	I	R	U	T	S	Y	D	S	S	N	E	U	T
A	O	P	S	M	A	R	K	E	T	O	A	A	S
I	N	S	U	R	A	N	C	E	O	M	S	L	T
I	S	E	F	I	N	A	N	C	E	Y	E	R	I
O	P	E	R	A	T	I	O	N	S	T	S	E	U

- DISEASES
- LOSS
- AVOID
- OPERATIONS
- DROUGHT
- PROTECT
- DECISIONS
- FACTORS
- MANAGEMENT
- CONSULT
- AGRONOMY
- FINANCE
- EFFORTS
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