



Good records for good income

Starting your own dairy farm is a difficult task that needs good planning. Hard work alone is not enough to get this kind of business off the ground.

Jas Wasserman, an advisor at the Intervet MPO Institute for Dairy Technology (IDT), used to be a dairy farmer. On this page, he will share his knowledge to help you set up your goals and solve problems experienced in your farming business.

“Record-keeping is very important”, says Wasserman. “We have drawn up basic record-keeping forms that will help any small-scale dairy farmer to improve his business.”

The forms will help the farmer keep track of milk volumes, cow performance, each cow's health, production, and many more aspects. Milk recording also helps the farmer to plan ahead. By knowing each cow's status and performance, the farmer can determine what his income and expenses will look like.

For example: You have ten cows. Five are in milk, two are in heat and three are ready to calf. By keeping record of each cow's performance, you can determine when she will start drying off, when she will probably be in heat, when she is expected to calf and how much milk she will give if she is healthy. This will help you to know what kind of income you can expect.

Milk recordings can help to pinpoint diseases because it tracks a decline in milk volume. Milk sales should also be recorded. Small-scale emerging farmers should start off by selling out of hand. “Rather sell the milk yourself in the beginning. This way you can better determine your own income, without being totally dependent on a milk buyer.” He adds that dual purpose cattle are a good way to ensure financial stability. “If the milk price forces you to look for other ways of getting an income, you can always sell a few cows for their meat.”

The IDT regularly distributes these forms at mentorship training sessions. For more information and a complete form, phone Jas on 082 490 2465 or 012 843 5743 during office hours.

Here is a simplified example of a weekly milk recording form, which you can copy for use on your own farm. Enter the amount of litres that each cow gives during the morning (AM) and the evening (PM) milking sessions. [UM](#)

WEEK NR MONTH YEAR

DATE															Comments
Cow nr	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday		
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	