



## The Basics of Using Excel

On this Growing Farm Profits training CD ROM, there are several “Excel” files that demonstrate how you can use simple, and sometimes a bit more complex, spreadsheets to help you track the farm data that impact your profitability.

Excel is an easy to use computer program. Even if you have little or no experience using Excel, you should be able to quickly learn enough to use the data collecting and analyzing tools we provide.

Here is a very easy online guide for using Excel, in two parts. You must have access to the internet to run through this primer because they show you images, let you test yourself and, if you need more information about a specific step, provide links to other webpages.

### **Primer:**

#### Part 1

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel-help/get-to-know-excel-2007-create-your-first-workbook-RZ010076674.aspx>

#### Part 2

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel-help/get-to-know-excel-2007-enter-formulas-RZ010074593.aspx>

### **Freeze Window Pane Function:**

One trick that is not covered in the above primer is the “Freeze Window Pane” function. This function allows you to see your headers, even if your spreadsheet is so big it doesn’t all fit on your screen at one time. For example, if you have a spreadsheet with the 12 months of the year in columns across the top and you are entering data for October 30<sup>th</sup> in row 30, you can easily be sure you are entering the data in the October column if the header stays put while you scroll down the page. The same can apply to the row titles also, so that as you scroll to the far right, you will still be able to tell if you are entering data in the correct row.

To freeze the pane, click on the cell that is immediately below the column and is immediately right of the row you wish to stay in your view, no matter how far you scroll. In the toolbar across the top of the page, find “Window” or “View” and click on it, then click on “Freeze Panes”. To undo, simply click on “Unfreeze Panes”.

***CAUTION: When you open a file, always remember that the Freeze Pane function may be on and that you may not be looking at the entire sheet.***

### **Inserted Comments:**

Comments can be inserted to help you better understand the contents of a particular cell. A red triangle in the upper right corner of a cell indicates a comment has been inserted. If you scroll over that cell, a note of explanation will pop up. You can insert your own comments to help you remember important information by clicking on the specific cell of interest, then click on “insert comments”, then type your note in the dialog box that pops up.

### **Sample Records:**

On this Growing Farm Profits training CD ROM we have provided you Excel files that are sample records. The sample records are “read-only”. This means you can study them, but you cannot enter any information to change anything that is on the spreadsheet.

### **Templates:**

We have also provided the templates that were used to create each of the sample records. With the templates, you can record your own data, using the sample record as reference. ***Before entering your own data, first copy the template to your computer and save the file by a name that makes it recognizable to you, such as “Farm Expenses 2011”*** (the primer above will teach you how to do this if you do not know how). Do not plan to save your new file to this training CD ROM.

In the templates, there are certain “cells” which have a predetermined formula in it. For example, where you see “Total” you’ll notice that it has been predetermined what data will be included in the Total. As you enter data, you’ll see the Total change. You can click on that cell to see the formula – to see what data is being included in the total. The formulas are the meat of the files and are what make it simple for you to get from your data the information you need to make smart decisions. *Do not worry about deleting these important formulas. We have locked the cells that contain formulas so that you cannot accidentally change them.*

### **Word about Veggie Compass:**

In Veggie Compass, you may need to change the name of your market channels or add an expense line item. If you do need to do this, all you need to do is first unprotect the sheet by finding “Tools” or “Review” in your menu bar at top, click on “Protection”, click on “Unprotect Sheet”. The password is ssawg. ***If you must edit one of these text cells that we have locked, make your edit and then immediately protect the sheet again by clicking on “Protect Sheet”.***

In Veggie Compass, we strongly recommend you ***do not change any cells with a formula in it.*** Since all of these sheets work together and data is drawn from many different sheets to make calculations, you may corrupt the system and cause it to provide incorrect information.

Veggie Compass is comprised of very large spreadsheets that will require much scrolling up and down and left to right to use the entire sheet. ***Again: When you open a file, always remember that the Freeze Pane function may be on and that you may not be looking at the entire sheet.*** Use the scroll bar at the bottom right of the page to move left and right or the scroll bar on the right side to move up and down.

Remember that, including the introduction page, there are 7 spreadsheets in the Veggie Compass file. Use the tabs at the bottom of the page and the arrow buttons on the bottom left, to reach all 7 sheets.