**February 2015**
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**Turn your farm records into profits**  
Mark Jenner, Ag Business Specialist

2014 was an exciting year in agriculture! As the New Year begins, it is a great time to reflect on the parts of your operation that went really well and also on the parts that didn’t go as expected.

How did your farm compare to where you were at this time last year? Did you finish better than you imagined you would, or not quite as well as you expected? Some risks in farming are unavoidable while other risks can be reduced or avoided all together. Planning allows risks to be reduced and managed.

While your farm may be profitable, is there room for improvement? Do you have the records you need to see the entire big picture for your farm? Your farm is likely producing more output with fewer inputs than it did a decade ago. What will it look like ten years out? There is no known limit to increases in efficiency. The trick is finding ways to make the gains.

For 2015, set some goals and realistically challenge yourself and your team to do better. Farmers are the best at finding ways to save money in the short term. It is important to look at the long term also. Are there other enterprises that interest you? Are you interested in You-pick orchards, expansion into direct sales, or do you simply need more land, or a larger herd? Once the target has been set, it is easier to chart the course!

Are you getting the most out of your crop and livestock production? The only way to know is to collect data on your own operation. Collecting data usually costs something. It isn’t free. The key question is, “Can the investment in collecting farm data provide greater returns? The answer is, “almost always!”

Think about ways that access to your production data could help make improvements. Each farm’s situation is nearly always different than the reported averages. Each farm can benefit from collecting its own data on its own crops and livestock. Farm data looks like: soil tests, calf weights, weighing a few bales, or testing forage quantity. When we buy and sell corn we pay attention to moisture and test weights. If the crops and livestock don’t leave the farm, we often don’t even come close to knowing what is actually happening on our farms, unless we are collecting the data.

It is a good time to revisit partnership arrangements and lease agreements. In partnerships with friends and family it is easier to start out with traditional rules of thumb, like a one third: two thirds crop share agreement. But land prices, input costs, and commodity prices all change with regularity. Rental and lease agreements for cropland, pastures, and even breeding females, need to be reviewed periodically to make sure everyone is getting close to market value for their returns.

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Have you ever wondered about any of these nutrition and health matters?
Lydia Kaume, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist

Sometimes we get so many health messages that we are left wondering or confused about certain matters. In this brief article Dr. Lydia Kaume, a Nutrition and health Education Specialist with the University of Missouri Extension in SW region explores some things you may have wondered about……..

Is there whole-wheat flour that is white?
Yes. There is a light colored type of wheat grain from which white whole-wheat flour is produced. This white whole wheat flour is similar in nutrients to the traditional whole wheat flour. This is a good choice to replace our regular white flour and still get fiber, vitamins and minerals that come with whole grain flour.

Is virgin olive oil fewer in calories than pure olive oil?
No. These terms only refer to acid content. “Extra virgin oil” has less acid and is fruity flavored. “Pure” or “virgin” olive oil is higher in acid content. The terms “light or mild olive oil” means the taste and color are mild. Caloric content is the same. Olive oils can vary in taste, on the basis of type and quality of olives, time of harvest, weather and region from which the olives were produced. Remember even healthy oils are high in calories; 1g of oil gives us 9 calories of energy.

Could a thyroid problem be associated with high blood cholesterol?
Yes. A thyroid gland that is not working well could result in high blood cholesterol. Hypothyroidism occurs when the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroxin. Some signs include: Feeling tired and sluggish, cause poor memory, dry skin, weight gain, muscle cramps, heavy menstrual flow, constipation and high LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol). A routine physical exam is recommended to check for thyroid problems.

Do zinc lozenges, sprays and gels help people recover faster from colds?
There is no clear evidence. Some studies say yes some say no. Talking to your healthcare provider before using these is advised as some of the products have caused people to lose their sense of smell.

Does microwaving destroy vitamins?
Even with the best care, some water soluble vitamins, which are vitamin B and C can be destroyed or lost in small amounts. Generally because mostly microwave cooking takes a short time, food is covered and little or no water is used, more vitamins are actually retained.

Send me your questions at kaumel@missouri.edu or call the MU extension office at  417-682-3579.
For more information on nutrition, go online to http://extension.missouri.edu

Pruning Fruit Trees
John Hobbs, Ag and Rural Development Specialist

February and early March is an excellent time to prune your fruit trees. Sometimes, we plant trees and neglect them for several years or just don’t have time to maintain and keep them pruned on a yearly basis. So, what are some of the corrective practices to do then? First, study the tree to determine some of the major problems. One of the first things to do is to remove all sucker growth around the base of the trunk around and the base of the main trunk.

The second step is to remove outer branches if they hang so low to make walking beneath the tree and working on it easier. Apples and crab apples often contain very upright shoots off major horizontal branches. These are called “water sprouts” and should be removed in the pruning process.

Scaffold branches are the main structural branches that develop off the main trunk. In older, neglected trees there may be many of these, allow only three to five of these main branches to remain and form this scaffold. These should be positioned on different sides of the tree. Select the widest angle as they come off the tree. In selecting scaffold branches, also remove major branches that are crowded, growing somewhat vertical, or developing close together outwardly in the

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All of these decisions and management choices can help you tune your farm operation performance and get most out of your current resources. Helping folks with crop, livestock, and business management decisions is what MU Extension does. We get paid to help you do better. For more information call your local county Extension office.

The New Year is before us. Let’s all make the most of it!

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canopy. One of the goals of pruning is to allow more light to penetrate into the center of the tree, which improves the fruit ripening and coloring. It also makes pest control easier when needed.

Another aspect of pruning a neglected tree is height reduction. Cut tall upper branches back to lower, outward facing shoots on branches that have more horizontal growth. Fruit production is greater on horizontal branches. Lowering overall height makes harvest easier.

Peach trees produce fruit on 1-year old wood. On neglected peach trees, prune most of the top of the tree and the ends of the scaffolds. Peaches may be pruned as much as ½ of the total wood each year after the main corrective pruning is done. Pears on the other hand, require less pruning and should not have more than \( \frac{1}{10} \) of their wood removed at one time. Plums also require a light annual pruning. Cherry trees mainly need light pruning.

Sometimes heavy pruning is necessary on neglected trees and may result in reduced fruit production for one or two years afterward. In the long run healthy trees will recover and become heavy producers.

For more information on fruit trees contact your nearest Extension office.

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Upcoming Barton County Extension events:

**Pesticide Private Applicator Training**

Saturday, February 7  
9 am-12 pm, Extension Office  
To register call the Extension Office

**Farm Bill Decision Tool Workshop**

Monday, February 9 and Wednesday, February 18  
Extension Office, 9 am-7 pm (2 hour time slots: 9 am, 11 am, 1 pm, 3 pm or 5 pm)  
With the help of Extension specialists, producers can enter information into the Farm Bill decision tool during the workshop to determine which Farm Bill option to choose. Producers need to bring information from Farm Service Agency and crop insurance.  
To register call the Extension Office, 417-682-3579

**Soils & Crops Conference**

Tuesday, February 10  
9 am-2:30 pm, Thiebaud Auditorium  
To register call the Extension Office