

When do farmers need energy audits for their farms?

Generally speaking, every five years a farmer should take a look at energy used on their farm and consider opportunities for reducing energy consumption. However, many factors determine exactly when someone needs to conduct an energy audit. For instance, if a farmer already had an energy audit conducted on the farm, it will continue to provide accurate information regarding potential energy savings until they make changes that affect energy usage.

Unless there were changes made in the operation, the audit that had already been conducted on the farm would give a good idea of the energy savings from various options that were considered. However, if energy prices change or there is an additional energy alternative that a farmer is considering using that was not addressed initially, a new audit may be in order. Changes in energy prices can alter payback periods. Changes in the relative prices of energy sources over the past few years will change what fuel a farmer might use. However, it generally doesn't pay to change what type of fuel you are using unless a piece of equipment such as a furnace or an engine needs to be replaced.

Here are some additional recommended guidelines to help farmers decide when they need an energy audit on their farm:

- If enterprises have been added to the farming operation after an original audit was completed, they need to be audited as they change total energy consumption.
- If an additional farm location has been added to the farming operation, it is recommended that a farmer conduct an audit on the new location.
- When equipment needs to be replaced, energy use of the replaced components should be considered.
- New industry developments might necessitate a new energy audit or assessment. A good example is lighting developments (LED and CFL options) that have taken place over the past few years.
- If a farmer wants to apply for a grant or loan for energy updates, they may need an updated energy audit or assessment.

For more information on energy audits see the checklists on this website.