

YOUR FARM YEAR-ROUND:  
A SYSTEMS-BASED  
APPROACH TIMELINE

As a producer you wear many hats: Agronomist, Operator, Marketer, and Manager. To help you keep track of all the different activities that need to be completed during each part of the year, we have compiled common tasks broken down by season and category. Use this timeline to address all areas of production across your farm!

AGRONOMY

Agronomy tasks contribute to the actual growth of the crop such as soil fertility applications, crop scouting, and pesticide applications.

OPERATIONS

Operations tasks include activities related to equipment upkeep and maintenance as well as addressing any in-field problems.

MARKETING

Marketing tasks are comprised of activities associated with crop insurance, grain storage, forward contracting, and selling grain.

PLANNING

Planning tasks include any activity associated with the economic success of the farm, like budgeting, tracking of grain hauling, input purchases, and analysis of agronomic practices.

POST-HARVEST

NOVEMBER, DECEMBER

Take a little break and spend time with your family! Then, focus on reviewing the outcome of this season and planning and preparing for next season.

PLANNING

- Determine test plots
- Decide on next year's crop rotation
- Analyze costs and practices by field / farm / crop to prepare for next year
- Check that all scale tickets and contract commitments have been filed and accounted for
- Track payments and invoices from grain buyers
- Roll-over your costs to prepare your taxes
- Compare your estimated costs to your actual costs for the growing season
- Pre-purchase some of next year's inputs (depending on discounts offered and need for reduction on tax liabilities on profits)
- Analyze practices performed this year
- Close out year end books / finalize capital investment plans
- Create end of year reports for stakeholders (landlords, bankers, partners)
- Report profit and loss

AGRONOMY

- Perform fall tillage to incorporate residue
- Continue soil testing for P, K, and micronutrients
- Book and apply fall P and K fertilizer
- Apply fall N, remember to wait until the soil temperature is 50 degrees or below, and consider including a N-stabilizer to prevent N loss
- Burndown fall weeds and apply residual herbicide to prevent fall and early spring weed seed germination
- Analyze this year's yields

MARKETING

- Finish up hauling last bushels of grain
- Submit any crop insurance claims
- Build your marketing plan for both old-crop wrap up and new-crop early commitments

OPERATIONS

- Perform maintenance, clean equipment, store for the winter, and evaluate the need for new equipment

PLANTING

MARCH, APRIL, MAY

The season is underway! Watch the markets closely and take advantage of favorable pricing.

AGRONOMY

- Plant crop
- Start in-field crop scouting
- Perform final seedbed preparation
- Apply at-planting nitrogen
- Apply pre-plant/early post-emergence herbicides with residual

MARKETING

- Forward contract 20% of new crop
- Sell some of your old crop for cashflow purposes
- Track crop reports and South American growing conditions for marketing triggers

PLANNING

- Finalize growing season crop-protection inputs

OPERATIONS

- Continue to perform equipment maintenance and repair to ensure planting timeliness

HARVEST

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

Harvest has officially started! Take advantage of the rainy days to play catch up on record keeping, this will make things easier going into post-harvest.

MARKETING

- Haul grain
- Track average price of grain sold

PLANNING

- Track loads hauled to elevator and reconcile to estimates / fields
- Track loads going into on-farm storage
- Track progress on contract fulfillment
- Set parameters for moving grain out of storage for future sale
- Reconcile load tickets to yield monitor
- Begin to review yield data and preliminary test plot results to early book the best hybrids and varieties

OPERATIONS

- Identify and complete any field improvements you want to make
- Collect grain samples from old crop in bins to monitor quality and moisture
- Measure old crop in grain bins for accurate record keeping to reconcile old crop inventory before new crop is harvested

AGRONOMY

- Collect soil samples to test for P, K, and micronutrients
- Make sure you calibrate your yield monitor for accurate yield maps

PRE-PLANTING

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH

A new year is starting! Time to get your fields prepped and equipment ready to go.

AGRONOMY

- Perform early spring tillage to incorporate residue
- Apply spring burndown and/or early pre-plant herbicide
- Apply early spring N
- Apply spring P and K fertilizer, and remember, applications of some P fertilizers provide an additional source of N

MARKETING

- Forward contract 10% of new crop
- Continue to build your marketing plan including accrued costs, marketable units, strategy, price target, and timing
- Finalize crop insurance details
- Attend grower meetings and seminars

PLANNING

- Complete test plot planning
- Explore new equipment business cases and ROI
- Determine any new practices and experiments
- Finish input purchases
- Visit with banker and secure operating line of credit and review yearly cashflow

OPERATIONS

- Prepare planting and spring tillage equipment
- Continue to make any field improvements

**MARCH:** Crop insurance deadline to renew, enroll, or cancel application

GROWING

MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

Watch your crops grow! Tend to your crop in the ground and get out into your fields for scouting.

AGRONOMY

- Scout crops
- Apply sidedress or topdress nitrogen to corn
- Apply post-emergence herbicide and/or insecticide with residual
- Apply fungicide and/or insecticide if needed
- Perform in-field yield estimates and checks

OPERATIONS

- Make necessary grain bin repairs or additions
- Prep harvest equipment

MARKETING

- Evaluate grain in storage
- Forward contract 20% of your crop

PLANNING

- Reconcile estimated costs of production with actual costs