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A MICRO COMPUTER BUDGET PROGRAMME FOR FARM ENTERPRISES

Marius Smit and Johan Rothman, Republic of South Africa

Abstract

Enterprise budgets are recognized farm management aids and are especially suitable in short term planning. It can be used for policy analyses and economic considerations of farming which are based on enterprise budgets. Among other, these budgets form the basis for calculation on the tailoring of research results, evaluation of schemes, development of projects and aid measures.

The South African Department of Agriculture uses a mainframe computer programme to compile enterprise budgets. Access to mainframe computing is an unnecessarily cumbersome and the challenge was to develop a system adapted to meet the requirements of contemporary farm management. A tender for the programming of the micro-computer system was allocated to Q Data Consulting (Pty) Ltd. The system is currently under development at Elsenburg in the Western Cape, Department of Agriculture (South Africa). The completion date for programming is March 1997.

The proposed programme will improve the existing mainframe programme through addressing specific limitations. The programme will be operational on a micro-computer and decentralized processing will be possible. Decentralized stations link electronically with a central station and it is possible to upload or download data into or from a certain station. There is provision for transferring data electronically from external systems. Data can also be obtained from sources such as group discussions with farmers and be entered in directly. Provision is also made for computer links to other programmes and systems, for example the comprehensive farm-planning model.

In addition to English and Afrikaans, it will be possible to generate budget reports in a third language most commonly used in a specific area. Reports that can be compiled and printed are:

- *Gross margin and Nett margin above specified cost;*
- *Inputs supplement and Cash flow;*
- *Monthly machinery utilization per activity and Energy requirements per implement;*
- *Quantity budget and Parametric analysis;*
- *List of activities by period and Livestock information.*

These budgets reports form the basis for planning. A standard methodology for compiling budgets are provided in order to increase their comparative value and usefulness.

The new definition of the farming entrepreneur and the shift in focus to the disadvantaged farming communities in South Africa would be addressed with this micro-computer budget programme. It will be equally suitable for compiling enterprise budgets for commercial and developing agriculture. The programme will facilitate improved decision making on provincial, national and international level.

About the Authors

Marius Smit is in the Agricultural Economics and Financing Division, Western Cape Department of Agriculture, Private Bag X1, 7607 Elensburg, Republic of South Africa. Phone: +27 21 808 5203, Fax: +27 21 808 5210, Email: Lpe7@Elsburg1.agric.za or Le10@Elsburg1.agric.za

Johan Rothman, Q Farm Division, Q Data Consulting, Wellington, Republic of South Africa.