

Analysis History in Minnesota

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The farm analysis system used in Minnesota was based on the accounting system developed by the University of Minnesota in 1901. These records were concerned with farm inventories, hours of labor, and income and expenses. The information was used to establish average values on a typical farm operation. At that time the project was primarily for research.

- 1913:** Farmers mailed in information monthly, which included data on livestock enterprises and the feed consumed. An earning statement and cost for each type of livestock was completed for each farmer.
- 1928:** A record of farm products consumed in the home and family living expenses were recorded. Averages were also printed for the area on a timely basis.
- 1940:** A preliminary report summarizing the farm operation and making comparisons with the average, high, and low-return groups was developed.
- 1946:** A full-time veteran's trainer was employed in Alexandria to teach groups of veterans returning from the war. Farm management economics became the backbone of the program. This was the precursor to the farm management program as we know it today.
- 1953:** The University of Minnesota put forth a procedure for calculating the measures of efficiency entitled Release 1. This was the first attempt to standardize the analysis procedure in Minnesota.
- 1955:** Analysis centers were opened in Thief River Falls, Mankato and Austin. In 1956, analysis centers were opened in Winona, St. Cloud and Duluth. In 1962 the analysis center in Willmar was opened.
- 1960:** Stan Nelson (Thief River Falls) investigated the use of electronic analysis of the farm account book.
- 1965:** Coordinators had the option of using the hand analysis or to fill out the electronic analysis forms and mail them to Agriculture Records Cooperative (ARC) in Madison, Wis. The complete process, from closeout at the farm to returning the analysis, took two to four weeks.
- 1968:** The analysis center in Jackson was opened and a second analysis center was added to the northwest area at Staples. The farm analysis was a hand calculation process that was a variation of Release 1. As the number of farm analyses grew, the analysis centers were having trouble returning the analysis to the instructor on a timely basis.
- 1967:** Dr. Persons convened a group of instructors and coordinators to orchestrate major changes to the electronic analysis; this became known as Paul Bunyan I.
- 1971:** Agricultural Records Cooperative (ARC) developed a computerized depreciation package to enhance the electronic analysis system. The analysis was updated with minor changes almost yearly from 1969 through 1982.
- 1983:** With the advent of the microcomputer, the analysis process was changed. The analysis center input and transmitted the records to Specialized Data Systems (SDS) in Madison, Wis. This process eliminated three to five days in the analysis process as well as mail time.
- 1985:** Specialized Data Systems initiated a data capture and transfer program. The instructors would enter the data and the program would perform a number of accuracy checks. These checks greatly reduced the number of errors not caught before the analysis was transmitted to SDS. The data capture program also provided an instant mini-analysis for the farmer. The turnaround time for the complete analysis was now two to four days.
- 1986:** Dr. Persons convened the Paul Bunyan II conference in St. Paul to update the farm analysis system. Participants came to the conference with hundreds of suggestions.
- 1988:** The analysis program provided an instant mini-analysis and could be transmitted directly to SDS by the analysis center, retrieved and printed immediately.
- 1989:** The analysis program added historical trends to the database. A state advisory committee was formed to look at alternatives to using the SDS and FinanX analysis.
- 1990:** The analysis program added graphing of the historical database. Special sorts were added to be able to analyze the database in new ways. Instructors started changing over to the FINAN analysis system.
- 1993:** The analysis was changed to do a complete analysis on the micro-computer.
- 1996:** By 1996 all areas of the state had converted to the FINAN analysis system. This analysis system provided the first statewide database. Also, in 1996 the farm management programs initiated a website that provided information on all areas of the state. The web address is www.mgt.org
- 2000:** The University of Minnesota's Center for Farm Financial Management started a web-based program that provided the opportunity to search the database for specific information, www.finbin.umn.edu.
- 2003:** The statewide database included more than 2,150 farms from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU).

As you can see, the changes taken place over the years have been significant. Adjustments are made periodically to the analysis. The analysis needs to keep up with the changing face of agriculture. We have five years of data available on the website that is accessed worldwide. The analysis is still the cornerstone of management education in Minnesota.