FARMDATA SMALL FARM CENTRAL PILOT – INFORMAL USERS’ SURVEY RESPONSES:

**Robinette Farms:**

Robinette Farms  
17675 SW 14th  
Martell, NE  68404  
402.794.4025  
[robinettefarms.com](https://exmail.dickinson.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=l84lOo_bvkicHdFIJfWCRsTCWHILe9IIvm4mr8o4EkoZAd66MxmwsNwX1F4GS8rFP18zQULIx_c.&URL=http%3a%2f%2frobinettefarms.com)  
[facebook.com/robinettefarms](https://exmail.dickinson.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=l84lOo_bvkicHdFIJfWCRsTCWHILe9IIvm4mr8o4EkoZAd66MxmwsNwX1F4GS8rFP18zQULIx_c.&URL=http%3a%2f%2ffacebook.com%2frobinettefarms)

On Tue, Jun 2, 2015 at 9:21 PM, Steiman, Matthew < [steimanm@dickinson.edu](https://exmail.dickinson.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=l84lOo_bvkicHdFIJfWCRsTCWHILe9IIvm4mr8o4EkoZAd66MxmwsNwX1F4GS8rFP18zQULIx_c.&URL=mailto%3asteimanm%40dickinson.edu)> wrote:

1.  Are you actively using FARMDATA now (Y/N)

 Yes.

2.  Do you plan to continue using FARMDATA into 2015 and beyond (Yes, no, maybe so)

 Yes.

3.  What words best describe your attitude about FARMDATA?  (Fast and easy, workable with some challenges, cumbersome)?  Feel free to elaborate:

 Evolving.  We are using it as much as possible, but got started a little late and now we're into the swing of farm season so it's hard to always get it done right.    Definitely workable with some challenges.  Mostly in terms of trying to find work-arounds when you're already stretched for time, but I think much of this will clear up with experience.

4.  What do you like best about FARMDATA?

 We are most excited about the potential to accurately track most of our operations and be able to review and improve.  You guys have been very responsive and helpful.

5.  What are your biggest challenges with FARMDATA or suggestions for improvement?

 In general, being consistent, which is on us!  We got buried with CSA paper pushing and I couldn't get all the seeds updated to do most of the spring GH and field plantings, so we may be a bit hamstrung for the season.  Next year all the seeds will be in the system in Jan/Feb.  Not enough experience at this point to comment.  Little to no negative experiences thus far.

6.  Who on your farm uses FARMDATA (manager, interns, laborers, etc.)?

 Office King and Field Queen.

7.  Please write "Yes" or "Y" next to all of the following FARMDATA features are you actively using.  Leave blank if not using.   If you keep these records on paper instead, please write "paper" or P next to that feature.  If you plan to use this feature in the future, please write "future" or F:

Direct Seeding P

Flat Seeding P

Transplanting P

Seed order/ inventory YES

Harvest P

Harvest List P

Labor

Tillage

Cover crop seeding P

Cover crop incorporation

Compost accumulation

Compost management

Compost temperature

Compost application

Dry fertilizer

Liquid fertilizer P

Scouting, insects

Scouting, weeds

Scouting, disease

Tractor sprays

Backpack sprays

Irrigation

Field notes / comments

Invoicing Quickbooks

Packing & Inventory Quickbooks

Distribution Quickbooks

Backdater

Graphs

Field record

8. Is there any particular support that would help you use FARMDATA more?

 Overall I think we need to use it a lot more to give many useful comments.  I was bummed that it took me so long to get the seed inventory updated -- perhaps I should have just bailed on that functionality, but alas.  Integration with quickbooks would be awesome but that seems like a monumental programming task and I'm not even sure what it would look like or what I'd want.

9.  Any final comments about your FARMDATA experience?

 Just THANK YOU!  We have so wanted to better track all of our operations, and the proprietary systems out there just don't seem to do it so we're VERY excited about the potential here -- great work and keep it up!

**Mary Oldham:**

1.  Are you actively using FARMDATA now (Y/N)

Some parts of it, yes.

2.  Do you plan to continue using FARMDATA into 2015 and beyond (Yes, no, maybe so)

I would like to! Maybe so.

3.  What words best describe your attitude about FARMDATA?  (Fast and easy, workable with some challenges, cumbersome)?  Feel free to elaborate:

It is fast and easy.

4.  What do you like best about FARMDATA?

Fast and easy; very organized; all the records we would want to keep but haven't figured out a good system for keeping in a coordinated fashion before!

5.  What are your biggest challenges with FARMDATA or suggestions for improvement?

Our biggest challenge is getting in the habit of entering everything all the time. It is the habit formation that is the challenge as it is with ANY record keeping system. FARMDATA itself is by far the easiest way we've found so far and we have more complete records than we've had in the past. We are keeping descent records on our seedings but have not kept up on what inputs are going in which fields. But I think we will get better at this once we get more experienced at our location because we are still changing our field layouts.

It is also difficult to discipline everyone to use it because if only one person is keeping up on it then the records are incomplete and affect someone who goes to use it later. For example, if you go to harvest broccoli and no one entered the planting date, it is tricky to track yields from that crop. (Again, a challenge with any record keeping system).

6.  Who on your farm uses FARMDATA (manager, interns, laborers, etc.)?

Two owners/managers.

7.  Please write "Yes" or "Y" next to all of the following FARMDATA features are you actively using.  Leave blank if not using.   If you keep these records on paper instead, please write "paper" or P next to that feature.  If you plan to use this feature in the future, please write "future" or F:

Direct Seeding Yes

Flat Seeding Yes

Transplanting Yes

Seed order/ inventory Paper

Harvest Paper

Harvest List Paper

Labor Some in farmdata although not as much as I'd like, F

Tillage some in farmdata; F

Cover crop seeding yes

Cover crop incorporation F

Compost accumulation No

Compost management No

Compost temperature No

Compost application yes

Dry fertilizer yes

Liquid fertilizer yes

Scouting, insects:  some, F

Scouting, weeds some, F

Scouting, disease some, F

Tractor sprays N/A

Backpack sprays yes, some, F

Irrigation No, F? maybe

Field notes / comments yes - super helpful

Invoicing not yet, F, now on paper and through Quickbooks

Packing & Inventory no

Distribution no

Backdater yes

Graphs no, F

Field record F

8. Is there any particular support that would help you use FARMDATA more?

 I would like to figure out the invoicing/harvesting piece but have not played around with it yet.

9.  Any final comments about your FARMDATA experience?

I think that the FARMDATA platform is by far the most user-friendly, complete, comprehensive, and integrated system for record keeping that I have found yet. I really want to make strides in using all of the different pieces of it and having an integrated set of records for the farm. We are learning to be more disciplined with it and I know that with time it will become second nature. The difference between FARMDATA and other record keeping systems is that it is so easy and you always have your phone on you. There have been so many times when we're out in the field and say, 'well when did we plant this crop'. In the past, we would have had to go back to a notebook and that just might not have happened. But now you can just pull out your phone and instantly pull up any record. It is things like that that make FARMDATA beneficial on a daily basis, not just later this season when we expect to look back at it and learn from the season.

I hope to be able to incorporate this more thoroughly into our operation. I've already been telling other farmers at our market about it and I think there could be an opportunity to get them on board with it...maybe host a training if that's something that could be offered virtually or in person. Hopefully FARMDATA will be available in the future or we can set up a platform locally.

**Scott Hoffman:**

1. Yes

2. Yes

3. A solid, well thought-out program.

4 workability with smartphones in the field

5 I think its progression to an app would be the only thing... I understand that's a whole different level of development but for those people who don't have data service in the field, or don't like waiting for pages to load etc.

the other thing is that we are doing as much non- vegetable work as anything else, for example we probably spend more of our total time moving or milking animals- we have been reluctant to use it to track labor for those animal tasks because FARMDATA is really set up for vegetables, but were we to somehow overcome that bias it would be a  great management tool for a farm where vegetable production is only one part of the whole.

6 myself and my partner (there are only two of us total)

7

Direct Seeding y  
Flat Seeding y  
Transplanting y  
Seed order/ inventory n  
Harvest f  
Harvest List f  
Labor not as much as we could   
Tillage same   
Cover crop seeding same  
Cover crop incorporation same   
Compost accumulation n   
Compost management n  
Compost temperature n  
Compost application should but n   
Dry fertilizer n   
Liquid fertilizer n  
Scouting, insects n  
Scouting, weeds n  
Scouting, disease n   
Tractor sprays n  
Backpack sprays n  
Irrigation no irrigation !   
Field notes / comments p  
Invoicing f   
Packing & Inventory f  
Distribution f  
Backdater y   
Graphs f  
Field record y

8 if Matt could call me after every fieldwork and ask me if I put that into FARMDATA

9 really I think it's great, impressively designed and user friendly, the biggest problem for us is remembering to use it to track things other than seedings and transplantings

**PLUM GRANNY FARM:**

1.  Are you actively using FARMDATA now (Y/N)  No

2.  Do you plan to continue using FARMDATA into 2015 and beyond (Yes, no, maybe so)  Maybe

3.  What words best describe your attitude about FARMDATA?  (Fast and easy, workable with some challenges, cumbersome)?  Feel free to elaborate:  Has some fast and easy features and provides direct data entry at the source.  It is very cumbersome and parts of it unworkable for us – a small diversified fruit & veggie market farm.  The insistence on entering crops by acre prevents me from accurately entering tomato planting in my 30x42 hoophouse.  The requirement that I can only harvest crops which I plant this year causes double entry for over-wintered crops like garlic, shallots, strawberries, frisee, carrots, lettuce, spinach, etc., since I want a record of the true planting date and FarmData requires me to enter it again as Jan 01 in order to be able to enter harvest data.  Reporting is then confusing – which frisee successions are double entered and which are single entered?  Perennials like brambles pose a similar problem.  We are a specialty crop grower with a brand of high quality and variety.  We grow 22 varieties of garlic on ¾ acre and want to track the dates and yield of each variety.  Very cumbersome since we can only enter varieties as separate crops and since a variety may take up take 1.25 beds (4 across in a bed) or even less than a bed, FarmData challenges me in trying to have multiple crops in a single row.  Even without trying to track varieties, multiple crops in a single 100’ x 200’ field (3 rows of artichokes, 2 rows of tomatillos, 2 rows of shishito peppers, 2 rows of aji dulce peppers, 10 rows of tomatoes (3 groups – fruits, paste, slicers), 3 rows of okra (red & green)) is unworkable.

4.  What do you like best about FARMDATA? Easy data entry on a tablet at the source points – field, pack house, anywhere.

5.  What are your biggest challenges with FARMDATA or suggestions for improvement?  See #3.

6.  Who on your farm uses FARMDATA (manager, interns, laborers, etc.)?  No one now.  Would like it to be manager & higher skilled workers.

7.  Please write "Yes" or "Y" next to all of the following FARMDATA features are you actively using.  Leave blank if not using.   If you keep these records on paper instead, please write "paper" or P next to that feature.  If you plan to use this feature in the future, please write "future" or F:

Not actively using.  Keep all records on paper (harvest & disposition logs) or Excel or Word

Direct Seeding

Flat Seeding

Transplanting

Seed order/ inventory

Harvest

Harvest List

Labor

Tillage

Cover crop seeding

Cover crop incorporation

Compost accumulation

Compost management

Compost temperature

Compost application

Dry fertilizer

Liquid fertilizer

Scouting, insects

Scouting, weeds

Scouting, disease

Tractor sprays

Backpack sprays

Irrigation

Field notes / comments

Invoicing

Packing & Inventory

Distribution

Backdater

Graphs

Field record

8. Is there any particular support that would help you use FARMDATA more?  A user group somewhere other than Facebook.  I don’t use Facebook for anything else and so find all the extraneous stuff annoying at best.  Yahoo is an option, or maybe Small Farm Central would donate a single purpose web page for you - - see the user forum format at growingformarket.com for an example.

9.  Any final comments about your FARMDATA experience?  I think FarmData has a great deal of potential to fill a huge need.  We were really excited about the possibility of having data online during the season when we can take mid-year action, rather than at year end after the double labor of data entry from paper.  You have a great platform for wheat farmers; you just need to tune it for small diverse growers.

I really appreciate your work in developing this and trying to improve it.  You are absolutely on the right track and I’m sure FarmData works very well for some.  I hope we can use it in the future.

Ray Tuegel

Plum Granny Farm

King, NC  27021

(336) 994-2517  (farm)

(505) 453-2286  (cell)

**LANDISDALE FARM CSA**

1.  Are you actively using FARMDATA now (Y/N)

 YES

2.  Do you plan to continue using FARMDATA into 2015 and beyond (Yes, no, maybe so)

 YES

3.  What words best describe your attitude about FARMDATA?  (Fast and easy, workable with some challenges, cumbersome)?  Feel free to elaborate:

 WORKABLE AND VERY USEFUL

4.  What do you like best about FARMDATA?

 TOOLS

5.  What are your biggest challenges with FARMDATA or suggestions for improvement?

 Not all the crops are planted in beds and the field is not square, more flexibility to enter data

6.  Who on your farm uses FARMDATA (manager, interns, laborers, etc.)?

 Manager

7.  Please write "Yes" or "Y" next to all of the following FARMDATA features are you actively using.  Leave blank if not using.   If you keep these records on paper instead, please write "paper" or P next to that feature.  If you plan to use this feature in the future, please write "future" or F:

Direct Seeding Y

Flat Seeding Y

Transplanting Y

Seed order/ inventory

Harvest Y

Harvest List

Labor

Tillage

Cover crop seeding

Cover crop incorporation

Compost accumulation

Compost management

Compost temperature

Compost application

Dry fertilizer Y

Liquid fertilizer Y

Scouting, insects

Scouting, weeds

Scouting, disease

Tractor sprays Y

Backpack sprays Y

Irrigation

Field notes / comments Y

Invoicing

Packing & Inventory

Distribution

Backdater

Graphs

Field record Y

8. Is there any particular support that would help you use FARMDATA more?

 WE USE SMALLFARMCENTRAL TO ORDERS AND QUICKBOOKS FOR INVOICING, FARMDATA FOR RECORD KEEPING, can they be linked

9.  Any final comments about your FARMDATA experience?

 The most challenge is to enter data on time, is being very useful, we just had our annual organic certification inspection and it was easier with FARMDATA to keep track of the activities on the farm. Great job!

--   
Ricardo Aulestia  
CSA Manager  
LANDISDALE FARM

**Zilke Vegetable Farm:**

Vicki Zilke

12725 Half Rd

Milan MI. 48160  
  
Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 2, 2015, at 10:21 PM, "Steiman, Matthew" <[steimanm@dickinson.edu](https://exmail.dickinson.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=l84lOo_bvkicHdFIJfWCRsTCWHILe9IIvm4mr8o4EkoZAd66MxmwsNwX1F4GS8rFP18zQULIx_c.&URL=mailto%3asteimanm%40dickinson.edu)> wrote:

HI Farmer friends!  Tim and I are working up our final report to Northeast SARE for the 2014 grant that helped fund the development of FARMDATA.  It would mean a lot to us if you can take 5 minutes out of your busy schedule to share your feedback about the project.

Any answers you provide will be very helpful!  To sweeten the pot, Matt will send a free FARMDATA t-shirt to the first three respondents who are actively using the website.  If you want a T-shirt, please include your name and address.

1.  Are you actively using FARMDATA now (Y/N)

Y

2.  Do you plan to continue using FARMDATA into 2015 and beyond (Yes, no, maybe so)

Y

3.  What words best describe your attitude about FARMDATA?  (Fast and easy, workable with some challenges, cumbersome)?  Feel free to elaborate:

Fast but quirky at times - requiring backtracking to enter data

4.  What do you like best about FARMDATA?

Easy, on-the-fly record keeping that is secure and retrievable

5.  What are your biggest challenges with FARMDATA or suggestions for improvement?

Very linear. 

6.  Who on your farm uses FARMDATA (manager, interns, laborers, etc.)?

Me, my husband, and our lead field crew chief 

7.  Please write "Yes" or "Y" next to all of the following FARMDATA features are you actively using.  Leave blank if not using.   If you keep these records on paper instead, please write "paper" or P next to that feature.  If you plan to use this feature in the future, please write "future" or F:

Direct Seeding y

Flat Seeding y

Transplanting y

Seed order/ inventory

Harvest y

Harvest List

Labor y

Tillage y

Cover crop seeding y

Cover crop incorporation

Compost accumulation

Compost management

Compost temperature

Compost application

Dry fertilizer

Liquid fertilizer

Scouting, insects

Scouting, weeds

Scouting, disease

Tractor sprays

Backpack sprays

Irrigation y

Field notes / comments

Invoicing

Packing & Inventory

Distribution

Backdater

Graphs

Field record

8. Is there any particular support that would help you use FARMDATA more?

None yet

9.  Any final comments about your FARMDATA experience?

Awesome simple process for our size. Thx!!