
Financial Guideline Measures

The Farm Financial Standards Task Force recommended the use of these financial measures to evaluate a farm's financial position and financial performance. These measures are grouped by: Liquidity, Solvency, Profitability, Repayment Capacity, and Efficiency.

Liquidity

Liquidity is the ability of the farm business to meet financial obligations in a timely manner, without disrupting normal business operations.

Current Ratio: The current ratio shows the value of current assets relative to current liabilities. It measures the extent current farm assets, if liquidated, would cover liabilities that are due during the next 12 months. The higher the ratio, the safer the short term position.

Working Capital: Working capital shows the dollar amount that current assets can or cannot cover current liabilities. It approximates the amount of capital available to purchase crop and livestock inputs and equipment necessary to produce farm products. The amount of working capital considered adequate must be related to the size of the farm business.

Working Capital to Gross Revenues: Measures operating capital available against the size of the business.

Solvency

Solvency is important in evaluating the risk position of the farm and family and in considering future borrowing capacity. Solvency measures the ability of the business to pay off all debts if liquidated.

Farm Debt To Asset Ratio: The farm debt to asset ratio measures the financial position or solvency of the farm or ranch by comparing the total liabilities to the total assets. It measures the portion of the farm assets that have debt against them. A higher ratio is considered an indicator of greater financial risk.

Farm Equity To Asset Ratio: The farm equity to asset ratio measures the farm equity relative to the value of the farm assets. It measures the proportion of the farm assets financed by the owner's equity whereas the debt to asset ratio measured the proportion of farm assets financed by debt.

Farm Debt To Equity Ratio: The farm debt to equity ratio measures the amount of farm debt relative to the amount of farm equity. It measures the amount of debt the farm has for every dollar of equity.

Profitability

Profitability is the measure of the value of goods produced by the business in relation to the cost of resources used in the production. Profitability calculated on a cost basis does not consider changes in market valuation of capital assets such as machinery and breeding livestock.

Rate of Return on Assets: Rate of return on assets is, in effect, the interest rate your farm earned in the past year on all money invested in the business. If assets are valued at market value, the rate of return on investment can be looked at as the "opportunity cost" of investing money in the farm instead of alternative investments. If assets are valued at cost (cost less depreciation), the rate of return represents the actual return on the average dollar invested in the business.

Rate of Return on Equity: Rate of return on equity is, in effect, the interest rate your investment in the business earned in the past year. If assets are valued at market value, this return can be compared with returns available if the assets were liquidated and invested in alternative investments. If assets are valued at cost, this represents the actual return to the amount of equity capital you have invested in the farm business.

If your return on assets is higher than your average interest rate, your return on equity will be still higher, reflecting the fact that there are residual returns to equity capital after paying all interest expense. This is positive use of financial leverage. If your return on assets is lower than your average interest rate, your return on equity will be still lower, reflecting the fact that borrowed capital did not earn enough to pay its interest cost. This is negative financial leverage. Profitability becomes a key concern when substantial debt capital is used in the business.

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Net Farm Income: Net farm income represents the returns to labor, management, and equity capital invested in the business. Without income from other sources, or appreciation of capital asset values, net farm income must cover family living expenses and taxes, or net worth will decrease.

Operating Profit Margin: The operating profit margin is a measure of the profit margin from the employment of assets. It measures how effectively you are employing assets relative to the value of output produced. Low prices, high operating expenses, or production problems are all possible causes of a low operating profit margin.

EBITDA: This factor stands for: Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization. This represents a measure of earnings available for debt repayment.

Repayment Capacity

Repayment capacity shows the borrower's ability to repay term debts (longer than one year) on time. This includes non-farm income, and is therefore not a measure of business performance alone.

Capital Debt Repayment Capacity: Measures the amount generated from farm and non-farm sources, to cover debt repayment and capital replacement.

Capital Debt Repayment Margin: The amount of money remaining after all operating expenses, taxes, family living costs, and scheduled debt payments have been made. It is the money left, after paying all expenses, which is available for purchasing/financing new machinery, equipment, land or livestock.

Replacement Margin: The replacement margin is the amount of income remaining after paying principal and interest on term loans and unfunded (cash) capital purchases.

Term Debt Coverage Ratio: The term debt coverage ratio measures the ability of the business to cover all term debt payments. A number less than 100 percent indicates that the business, plus non-farm income, is not generating sufficient cash to meet all of the debt payments, after family living expenses and taxes have been paid. A number greater than 100 indicates the business is generating sufficient cash to pay all term debt obligations with some surplus margin remaining.

Replacement Margin Coverage Ratio: This represents the ability to term debt and unfunded capital purchases. A ratio under 1.0 indicated that you did not generate enough income to cover term debt payments and unfunded capital purchases.

Efficiency

These measures reflect the relationships between expense and income items to revenue and the efficiency of the farm business with regard to the use of cash and capital assets.

Asset Turnover: Asset turnover is a measure of how efficiently assets are used in the business. A farm with good operating profit margin and asset turnover will show a strong rate of return on farm assets. If operating profit margin is low, the asset turnover rate must be strong, or vice versa, to maintain the rate of return on assets.

Operating Expense Ratio: This ratio indicates the percent of the gross farm income, which is used to pay the operating expenses. Operating expenses do not include interest or depreciation expense.

Depreciation Expense Ratio: This ratio indicates the percent of the gross farm income, which is used to cover the depreciation expense.

Interest Expense Ratio: This ratio indicates the percent of the gross farm income, which is used to pay farm interest expenses.

Net Farm Income Ratio: The ratio indicates the percent of the gross farm income, which remains after all expenses.