



## Brockett's Ag Advice

By John E. Brockett  
Farm Management Agent  
Lewistown Extension Office

### Which personal computer?

Last week I wrote about the application of Visi Calc with personal computers for on farm use. The four programs I have explored so far are farm analysis, cash flow, budgets, and amortization tables. Actually anything you can do with a calculator you can do with a Visi Calc. It may even be feasible to tie a record keeping system into the program. This will take some study.

### What kind of computer

There are a lot of personal computers around and it appears as though they are becoming engaged in a price war. My

suggestions would be: buy local or nearby so you have someone who can service the equipment; buy one that has a Visi Calc program that can be used with it; and look into the availability of other agricultural programs or software that can be used on the machine.

Now for some quasi-technical items. You don't have to understand the jargon but it helps. Visi Calc takes 30K of memory for itself. I found that the farm analysis program I did took 17K of memory. One of the amortization

programs took 24K of memory.

What does that mean? That means that you probably should look for a machine that has at least 48K of memory. Then I would suggest getting a card to give you another 16K. This would mean that you would have a total of 64K of memory. Most of the programs you would want to run would then be possible. Example: Visi Calc plus farm analysis requires 47K or Visi Calc plus a 25 year amortization program requires 54K.

### What else?

The computer package usually includes a computer, a monitor, a disc drive, various attachments called interfaces for use between the computer and disc drive or printer, and one or more basic programs. I think you would find a printer useful and for larger programs such as the farm analysis, one would be essential.

Some suggestions based on a short-time personal experience:

- ✓ Get a computer with at least 48K memory.
- ✓ Get a card that will add 16K to this memory.
- ✓ Get a green and black monitor rather than black and white because it is easier on the eyes.
- ✓ Use diskettes (use in disc drive) rather than tapes.
- ✓ Get a printer. They range in quality and price. Some print like a typewriter (they're more expensive) and some print in dots (they're cheaper). Ask for a demonstration.

Decide on what you want to print out before getting a printer. I wouldn't get anything that would print less than an 8-inch sheet. That size would do nicely for a

farm analysis or an amortization schedule. The standard sized computer paper used by large computers is 14 inches. The cost will be 50 to 60 percent more but may be worth it.

Get the Visi Calc program suitable for your computer.

### Cost?

Sale cost for the total package will probably be between \$2,100 and \$4,500 depending on the model, the dealer, and the quality of accessories. Is it worth it? Probably not if you do not intend to use it; perhaps if you use it in your farm business. Really only you can answer this (and of course your children who will probably use it more than you).

**THINK AHEAD...**  
Read Futures Markets on Page 3.

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