



## Selecting the right technology for your farm

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Technology has created new and exciting ways to manage and improve farming operations. From GPS to drones, from bin monitors to smartphones and apps, tech is everywhere. Along with the tremendous advantages that the tech has afforded farmers, there is potential for inefficiencies, frustrations, and, at worst – hazards. Selecting the right tech, using it to its best advantage, and being prepared for hazards can create a farming operation that is not only productive but also safe.

Before starting the process of purchasing any new tech, begin by considering the following:

- What task do you require the technology to perform? Often, tech (software or hardware) do more than we need. Ask yourself, do you need something basic or more complicated?
- Do you have the skill set or know where to go to learn how to use the technology effectively and safely? Will you be able to transfer those skills to an employee or family member that might also use the technology? What are the costs of any training?
- Figure out where you can go for troubleshooting. Will you need to hire someone? It's incredibly frustrating to have technology that doesn't operate as expected, and it's even more frustrating when you can't find help or answers.
- Do you have the platform in which the technology can perform effectively and safely? (For example, if purchasing a bin monitoring system, is the bin in good condition?)
- How will this affect the people on your farm? Will you have to hire a person to manage the new tech? Will it cause undue stress and frustration? How will you manage the impacts?

Once you determine what you need and want and any other barriers that might obstruct the tech implementation effectively and safely, you're ready for the next step.





## Research

There are all kinds of innovative and technologically advanced products out there. Most of the time, there are very similar products that can do the same tasks. But there are often differences in the fine print. It could be as simple as dedicated tech support or the possibility of fixing or troubleshooting yourself. It could even be training built into the purchase. These distinctions are important and could save you time and money. When performing research in a tech product, read reviews, check out the user manual (if available), talk to the reps and ask questions (remember: no question is stupid). If possible, speak to others that have the tech you're considering purchasing and determine if it's right for your operation.

## Selection

Just because the neighbouring operation has a piece of tech doesn't mean that it'll apply to your farm. No two operations are identical. Spending money and time on new technology that isn't necessary may negatively affect your farm. When you're selecting a piece of technology, make sure it's appropriate for your specific operation.

## Assessment

Before implementing new technology, conduct a hazard assessment and cost-benefit analysis. Could the tech potentially create a hazard? What are the consequences if the tech doesn't perform as anticipated? Who or what will be affected by the new tech? (This is especially important to consider for livestock operations.) What are the timelines for implementing the technology? What is the anticipated timeline for the return on investment?

## Control

After determining the hazards, it's essential to the safety of your farm to implement controls to address these hazards. It could be creating policies for anyone working with or around the technology. (For example, a 'safe zone' staying away from automated equipment, or distracted farming policy for smart devices.)

Most of these considerations when purchasing and implementing new technology aren't new. Most purchases require similar deliberations. Doing some research, making the best selection, doing an assessment and implementing controls will help ensure the technology integrates into your operation safely and effectively.





Safe operations are productive operations and productive operations are profitable operations. Grow safety on your farm by ensuring that you have made the best choices for you, your family and your farm.

This safety advice article is a part of Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW) is an annual campaign held the third week of March of each year. In 2020, Safe & Strong Farms: Grow an AgSafe Canada, takes place March 15 to 21. CASW is presented by Farm Credit Canada. For more information visit [agsafetyweek.ca](http://agsafetyweek.ca).

