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5 reasons apps have failed farmers

and what works

Why take on another app when it will either be no good, not work on your farm, be too complicated or end up just yet another tile in the mess on your phone screen? A waste of money and time. If this sounds like your experience – read on.

Apps, digital technologies, precision farming solutions – whatever you call them - have been held up as the next big thing to increase production, reduce costs and improve sustainability. You can't farm into the future without them – but you've given one or two a go and it didn't work out. You are disillusioned and reluctant to throw more time and effort into this.

The answer – take on one that solves these problems, rather than adds to them. But how do you find that one? Here are the 5 most common reasons apps have failed farmers – and what to look for in this next generation to avoid the pitfalls of the past.

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1 *Not going to work on your farm, especially connectivity*

Problem
Getting good cell phone or internet coverage in rural areas is a challenge and most apps these days rely on this. Up until now many makers of the apps and related sensors have baked in only one way to make the connection. Don't accept the "one size fits all" approach anymore, because it doesn't work for most farmers.

Solution
Find the solution that offers (at no extra cost) "one size fits many". You will be surprised how many ways there are to connect to the cloud – cell coverage 2G, 3G, 4G, 5G, internet fixed and wireless, IoT networks like LoRaWAN and satellite. Some solution providers build their equipment with all these options as a default – so whatever is available at your farm, the equipment will quickly find it and lock on.

2 *Too complicated*

Problem
It takes time to learn your way around any new app, and often there are lots of features available, but there might be only one you're interested in to start with - and you want to get there with one click. If you have staff that also need to use it, they need to be able to pick it up and use it straight away. You are time-poor, so this is a real turn-off.

Solution
The techies have learnt! (Some of them anyway) and they are spending more time with their users before launching to understand how YOU need it to work. There are products out there that genuinely are easy to find your way around, the feature you want to use it for is front and centre and you can tell that a real farmer has road-tested it before it got in your hands. Doing simple but useful is hard – so only the best will have achieved this. Keep looking until you find them. Many digital solution providers will offer demos or free tiers of membership that allow you to see the app and how it is used before you pay any money for it.

3 Doesn't integrate

Problem
It's a great product but you have to enter data manually from another app for it to work, or you want to send data from the new one to another product and there is no automated way to do it. It's an orphan, not part of the family.

Solution
There is a limit to the number of apps you can use and the more apps "talk" to each other the more valuable they become to you. Before you buy, ask the question – what other apps does this integrate with? What other integrations are planned? This will tell you a lot about the product – modern and progressive businesses know they need to be part of the family and the product will show that.

4 Too expensive

Problem
The app looks like it will solve a problem for you, but you need to invest upfront in hardware or an expensive subscription before you can really know if you can get the benefit. This is a risk/reward equation you don't want to take.

Solution
Quality and value can be found. Some products aim to make sure that cost isn't a barrier to access for farmers. They have worked hard to keep the overall product at a price point that makes sense for the farmer, reduces the upfront cost and risk without compromising durability and ongoing support. Search also for apps that will make an impact early in the season of its use, so your return on investment happens sooner than later. It might take a bit of searching, but these products are out there.

5 *Manual way is easier*

Problem
You already have a perfectly good system that has worked for you for years – it only costs your time. However, manual records are prone to errors (we are just human), getting lost, not being available when you need them and hard to share within a team.

Solution
You need an app that has all the advantages of your current system – easy to use and low cost – but delivers more. Like no mistakes or omissions, easy to share with all your team and other apps and doesn't cost an arm and a leg. When you find products that solve the challenges 1-4 above it will be solving this number 5 too.

Our whole world is increasingly becoming digitised, and farming is no different. A lot of progress has been made in the past decade to solve the initial problems with farming apps, so don't be discouraged. Use these 5 pointers to know what to look for so the next app you invest in delivers all that it promises!

About CropX
CropX is one of the fastest growing providers of agribusiness farm management solutions in the world, deployed in over 50 countries and across all the arable continents. The CropX platform synthesizes data from the earth and sky to offer advanced soil and crop intelligence and a suite of digital decision and planning tools, all on an easy-to-use app capable of tracking multiple farms and fields. CropX is backed by the world's leading agribusinesses and VCs, who recognize that CropX's precision-ag technologies set new standards of best practices for environmental sustainability and greater farm productivity.
Learn more at **cropx.com**

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