

AFRICAN FARMER: GETTING STARTED



1. User Interface

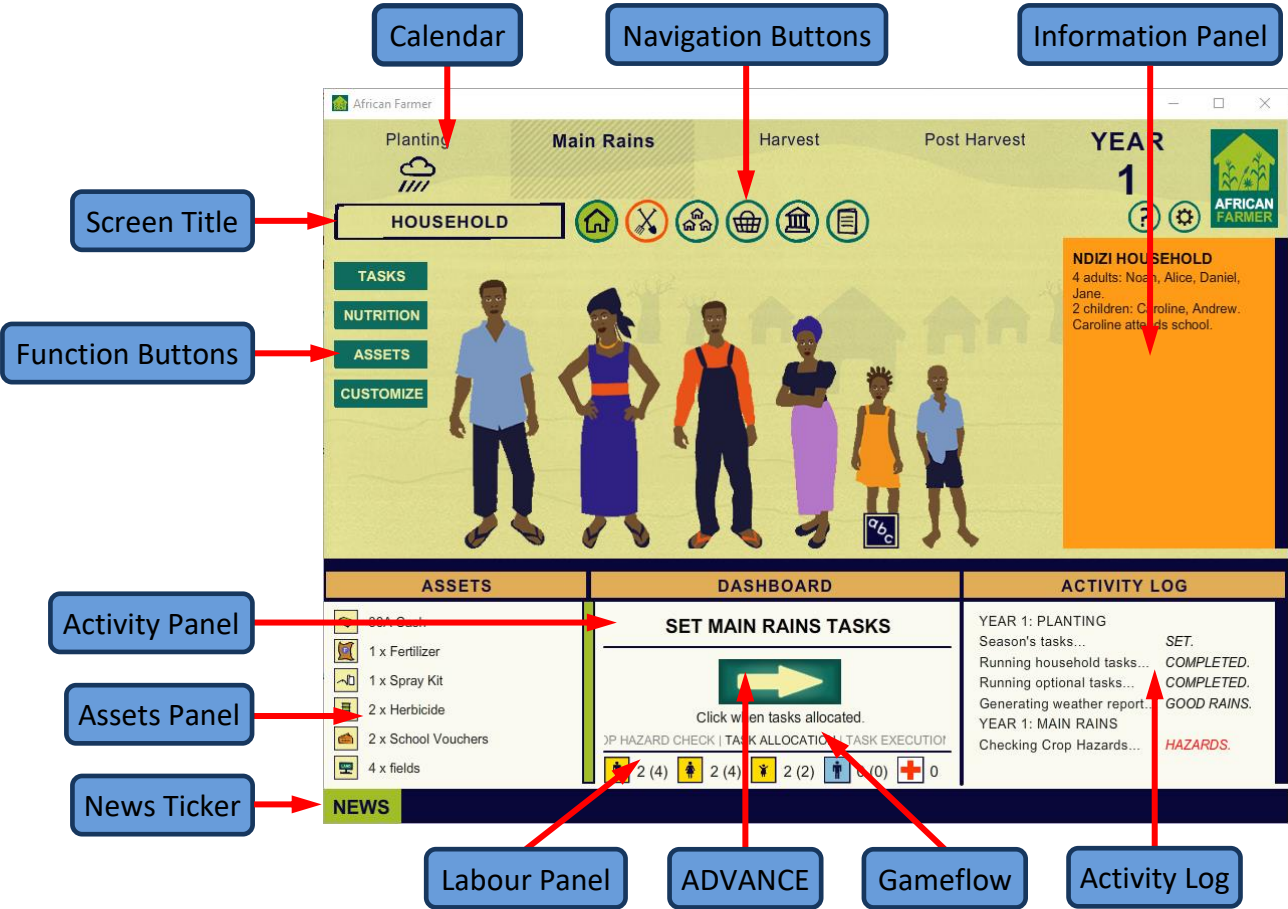


Fig. 1 Household screen showing UI elements

The **Calendar**, positioned across the top of the screen, indicates the year, season, and weather.

The **Navigation Buttons** move the player between the top-level screens:


Household , Farm , Village , Market , Town  and Game Statistics .

The **Function Buttons** enable you to complete screen-specific functions.

The **Information Panel** displays data relevant to your current location and activity.

The lower part of the screen contains elements that enable players to manage gameflow and track assets, labour, and events:

- **Assets Panel** - lists household assets. During task allocation unallocated asset quantities are shown in brackets, and net cash, or cash shortfall is indicated during diet allocation.
- **Labour Panel** - displays all household labour including labour hired at the market. During task allocation unallocated labour is shown in brackets. Household members in hospital are also indicated.
- **Activity Panel** - indicates the current game activity with a ticker display to show the current stage in the game cycle
- **Activity Log** - lists game activity history.
- **News Ticker** - displays market and community news.

Clicking the  button below the Activity Panel moves the game forward to the next stage.

2. Playing the Game

You are responsible for a small farming household in sub-Saharan Africa. You have some land, starting cash and the labour resources of your household. Your household's food requirements are covered for the first year. With these limited resources, you must manage the farm, feed your household and educate your children. You must decide which crops to plant, when to plant them, what inputs to use and how to respond to crop hazards that may occur.

2.1 Farm Management

Crop growth occurs over three seasons. For one planting season, the seasons are *Planting*, *Main Rains*, and *Harvest*: crops are planted in the *Planting* Season, tended (weeded, sprays and fertilizers applied) in *Main Rains*, and harvested in the *Harvest* Season.

For two planting seasons, the seasons are *Early Rains*, *Main Rains*, *Early Harvest* and *Late Harvest*: crops can be planted in *Early Rains* and *Main Rains*, tended in the following season, and harvested in the next (Fig 2).

By default, the following crops are available:

- Local maize – an inexpensive, low-yield variety of maize.
- High-yield maize – can give high yields when used with fertilizers.
- Drought tolerant maize – a drought tolerant hybrid that copes well with low rainfall.
- Beans – a good source of protein.
- Mixed Horticulture – a good source of vitamins, also a cash crop.
- Cotton – a cash crop.

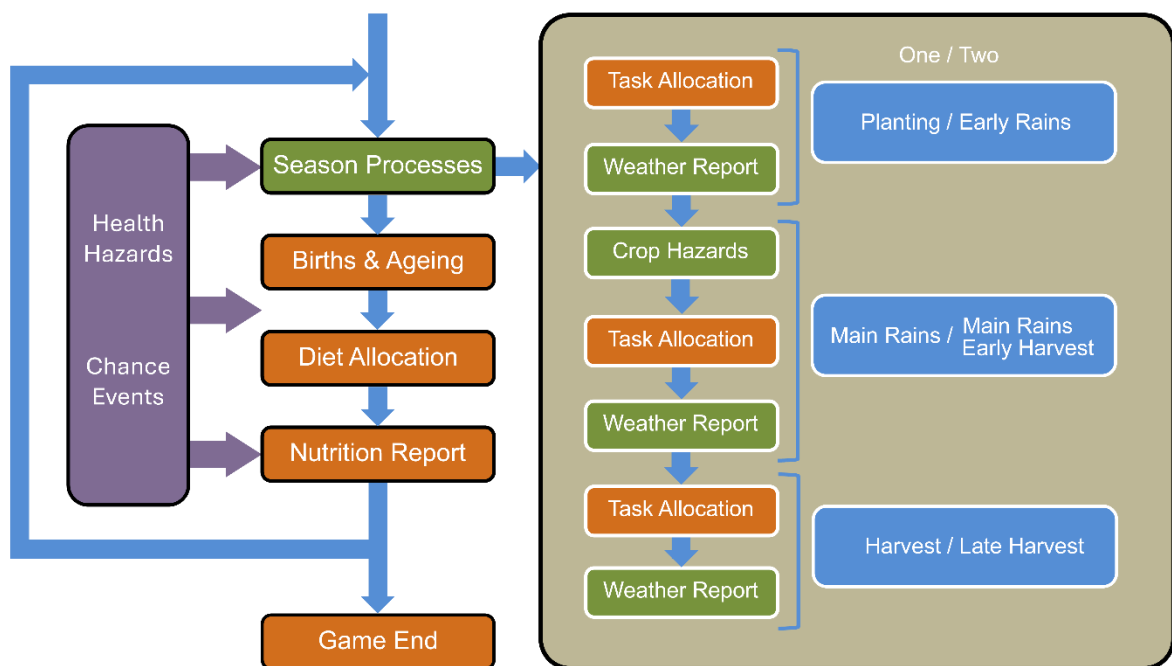


Fig. 2 Game Flow for One and Two Planting Seasons

Hybrid crop varieties, when used with fertilizers can give the highest yields. Manure and NPK Fertilizers can be used to improve yields for all crops.

Crop pests reduce yields though the losses can often be mitigated by spraying. Poor rains will also reduce yields. Manure can be applied only to unplanted fields. Fertilizer and sprays can be used only on planted fields.

Note that a Spray Kit must be purchased before spraying.

Failure to weed fields (manually or by herbicide spray) will reduce yields by 50%. Manual weeding requires two adult tasks. All other farm work required one task.

2.2 Task Allocation

Adults can be sent to town or carry out any two tasks; children can be allocated one domestic task or attend school. Labour must be allocated to mandatory tasks. If this is not done, labour will be transferred from farming tasks which will fail to complete. Children are sent to school at the start of each season. Each FULL year's attendance improves the chances they will make money if sent to town as adults.

Planting: Cook, Fetch fuel & water, Attend School. Sow Crop, Manure fields. Town Work.
Main Rains: Cook, Fetch fuel & water, Attend School. Fertilize, Spray Pesticide, Spray Herbicide or manually weed fields.
Harvest: Cook, Fetch fuel & water, Attend School. Harvest Crop.
Post Harvest: Allocate food.

Fig. 3 Tasks by season (mandatory tasks highlighted red)

2.3 The Market

At the market seeds, other inputs (manure, NPK fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide, fungicide, agriphage) and food can be purchased. Spray kits, which are needed to apply sprays, are also available. Land can be bought, sold, or rented. Labour can be hired and school vouchers purchased. Contraception is also available which will prevent any new household births in the current year. Market prices will fluctuate during the game. Land sale and rental prices will increase if available land becomes scarce. Seed and food prices vary with the size of harvest yields.

2.4 Nutrition and Health

After the farming work is finished for the year, household members age one year and new births may occur. Food must then be allocated to the household for the year ahead.

A balanced diet of protein, carbohydrate and vitamins is required for good health. Persons given poor diets are more likely to become ill and may die. Persons given very poor diets will die from malnutrition.

From the beginning of year two health hazards may occur at any time of the year:

- Persons on A-level diets are not susceptible to nutrition-related illness.
- Persons on B-level diets have some risk of nutrition-related illness.
- Persons on C-level diets are at significant risk of nutrition-related illness. Death is a possibility.
- All characters have a small chance of contracting HIV.
- Persons over 55 years of age have an increasing risk of dying from natural causes.

Persons who become ill cannot do any work and will remain unwell until medical fees are paid. Persons who contract HIV incur medical expenses each year. When a person dies, funeral expenses are incurred, which increase with the age of the deceased.

2.5 Finance

Households are given varying amounts of cash and land at the start of the game. Players can apply for loans at the bank. Loans are granted on the basis of a credit check.


Loan repayments, medical fees and funeral expenses are repaid at the bank. Assets will be seized to recover unpaid debts.

3. Game Statistics


Statistical data on your performance and the performance of the agents running the other nine households can be checked (and downloaded) in the *Game Statistics* screen.


4. Help

A set of short video tutorials covering key aspects of the game can be accessed from the opening screen by clicking TUTORIALS.

During gameplay, help can be obtained by clicking  to display a pop-up window where help on the current game stage or screen can be accessed. An overview of the UI and a game flow diagram can also be displayed.

Button mouseovers display help text when the cursor is moved over navigation or function buttons.

A *Stage Alert* window will pop up if you attempt to proceed to the next game stage without completing important tasks or allocating food (note that the alert can be ignored by clicking the  button once again).

The Help Settings can be configured in the *Game Settings Screen* before play begins or by clicking the  button anytime during gameplay.

5. Game Settings

In the *Game Settings* screen game features can be selected and the level of difficulty adjusted to match the player's experience. Help and alert options can also be set. Below is a summary of the main options.

Game Level

Three game level settings are also available which select a range of game options and a *Difficulty* setting. All settings can also be modified individually after a game level has been selected.

Game Features

- CLIMATE CHANGE: if set, the probability of prolonged periods of drought and the occurrence of extreme weather increases with each passing year. The severity setting adjusts the magnitude of the increase.
- CHANCE EVENTS: from the set starting year events modifying the normal seasonal rhythm may occur e.g. a government subsidy on hybrid crops or a transport breakdown interrupting market supplies.
- RANDOMIZE H/H: if set, the player's household composition and assets are randomly set at the start of each game. Otherwise the initial setup will remain the same for each game.

Farming

- PLANTING SEASONS: if one, seasons are *Planting, Main Rains, Harvest* and *Post Harvest*. If two, crops can be planted in both *Early Rains* and *Main Rains* and are harvested two seasons later; seasons are *Early Rains, Main Rains, Early Harvest* and *Late Harvest*.
- DIFFICULTY: sets the level of difficulty between 1 [LOW] and 5 [HIGH]. This setting modifies the player's starting cash and the achievable crop yields.
- TRACTION: animal or mechanised traction can be hired at the market to help in clearing fields for planting. Crop planting requires one adult task if traction is used or two without traction.
- POST-HARVEST LOSS: starting in Year 2, 25% of all household crops and food will be lost at the end of the first season if a granary has not been purchased for the secure storage of these goods.

Crops

- Select from beans, cassava, cotton, mixed horticulture, local maize, drought tolerant maize, high yield maize and sorghum.

Market

- LAND: sets the number of fields available for purchase and rent.

Nutrition

- BASIC: the player selects a fixed A-, B-, C- or X-level diet for each household member. The cost of diets will vary with market prices, though the cost will be lower if a higher proportion of food crops are grown.
- STANDARD and ADVANCED: players create diets from food grown or purchased at the market. Balanced diets require a mix of food sources that provide carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins.