

Farm-Based Businesses Help Boost Incomes

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next two pages.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or E-mail us at: Editor@farmshow.com.

Windrow Chute Boosts Value Of Straw

Daniel Prough is a wheat producer in an area where not a lot of wheat is grown. But he's discovered there's quite a market for the straw to the growing hobby farm and landscaping market in his area.

"Sometimes the straw is worth more than the grain," he notes. "With the popularity of rotary combines, which break up the straw more, customers have realized the more finely processed straw absorbs moisture better, is easier to spread by hand, easier to fork into spreaders after being used as bedding, and goes through manure spreaders better - especially the ground-driven ones used by the Amish in Prough's area.

"I couldn't justify buying a new rotary combine but I still wanted to be competitive in the straw market so I developed an adjustable chute for my Deere 6600 conventional combine that makes it easy to windrow the straw. By adjusting the knives on the chopper I've found I'm able to produce even better straw than comes out of a rotary because sometimes that straw is chopped up too much.

"After I developed this chopper chute, I became known locally as the Straw Man and soon had more orders for straw than I could produce, even though I was charging a premium over other producers. Buyers compare it to wood shavings only cheaper and safer for mares and foals at berth. Landscapers prefer it because it eliminates the



Adjustable chute on Prough's Deere 6600 combine makes it easy to windrow the straw.

dust and noise of chopping at the job site and because it's so much easier to spread.

"The straw chute is made of heavy, galvanized steel that mounts directly to the deflection plate at the rear of the combine's straw chopper. The spreading vanes are removed, the chute bolted on, and then the two outside vanes are reattached in reverse position to force chopped material into a windrow. The chute deflects anything the vanes miss.

"One bonus of this idea is that I no longer have to remove the straw chopper each year to windrow straw for baling. It works so well I made one for a neighbor's 9000 Series Deere in exchange for a deal to purchase his extra straw."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Daniel Prough, 1320 South 950 East, La Grange, Ind. 46761.

"It'll travel 35 to 40 mph and has plenty of power to handle big snowfalls," says Paul Barnes about the "snowbine" he built. The front and rear axles are off a Deere 55 combine and the cab off a Gleaner "L".



"Snowbine" Helps Pay The Bills

A reworked old combine and some miscellaneous parts resulted in a machine that helps boost the bottom line for Paul Barnes, who runs a machine shop in Shelbyville, Ill.

He built the "snowbine" from the front and rear axles off a 55 Deere combine, the cab from a Gleaner "L" (complete with heater, windshield wipers and tilt steering), and a small block Chevy V-8 engine with automatic transmission that runs to a Ford rear axle positioned between the 55 Deere's final drives. The hood over the engine compartment is off the top of a 6600 Deere combine straw walker.

The frame was built from scratch out of 3 by 8-in. steel tubing. It's built low to the ground to lower the center of gravity.

Hydraulics are supplied by a 55 Deere

pump controlled by more modern electric-over-hydraulic valves.

"It'll travel 35 to 40 mph and the 2-wheel drive has plenty of power to handle big snowfalls. But I am thinking of adding a 3/4-ton Dana 44 steering axle to the rear for additional traction," says Barnes, noting that hydrostatic 4-WD would probably work better than the mechanical transmission but he decided to work with what he had.

Paul mounted a blade on a front 3-pt. and gave the snowbine a fancy paint job, complete with a phone number advertising the snow plow business.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul Barnes, Barnes Machine Service, 209 N. Pine, Shelbyville, Ill. 62565 (ph 217 774-5308; fax 217 774-5310).



Dahl grows worms in long plywood boxes on the floor of an unused barn.

Worms Fit Farmer's Operation

Randy Dahl, Preston, Minn., started growing worms last April after signing a 3-year contract with a company called B & B Worm Farms of Meeker, Oklahoma.

The contract says the company will buy the Red Worms he can produce at a guaranteed price for three years. "There's no minimum or maximum amount I have to sell," says Dahl.

The guaranteed price is \$8 per lb. His initial investment was \$10,000.

The worms feed on waste products from Dahl's farm including everything from table leftovers to grass, leaves and manure.

Once harvested, the worms leave behind a byproduct called castings which Dahl says is a very rich organic fertilizer.

Composted cow or horse manure is used as a base for microorganisms that eat their way through the waste products. The worms live under a 3 to 4-in. deep layer of manure. The worms don't like lighting and prefer a warm environment close to 70 degrees. Dahl uses a heat tape. The worms do okay at 50 degrees but the eggs need more warmth to incubate. He keeps a thermometer in the compost. He has been told the worms will freeze at 29 degrees, unlike their field counterparts which can just burrow deeper into the ground to stabilize their temperature.

A female worm lays an egg every 7 to 10 days, and each egg carries 7 to 10 baby worms. "They multiply faster than rabbits," says Dahl. "After 20 days the eggs hatch and



Worm population doubles every 2 months.

there's a time span before they start reproducing again. On average there are about 1,000 worms per pound. Compared to the night crawler, which is a big fat, lazy worm, Red Worms are very active and aggressive."

He started raising worms in two small plywood boxes but found them too small for the work. He did some renovation in order to produce a windrow effect with the unit setting on the barn's cement floor. The first time the boxes were split there were literally handfuls of baby worms. The system is doubled every two months.

Dahl anticipates selling about one third to one half of the breeding stock. His ultimate goal is to utilize a building - he used to have a dairy and hog setup - that wasn't being used.

B & B Worm Farms has distributors in every state (www.bandworms.com).

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Windmill Rebuilding Turns Into Career

Harry Rose Jr. is one of the few full-time windmill repairmen in North America. He buys, sells and repairs old windmills, giving a new lease on life to old relics.

He was working in a steel fabrication shop when his boss told him he was trying to buy a windmill. Rose figured there must be a market for them so he went looking. He bought his first broken-down windmill for \$15 after finding it half buried behind a hedgerow.

He began acquiring more broken-down windmills, teaching himself how to operate and repair them. In 1982, Rose was able to quit his day job and work full time, adding made-to-order windmill towers to his business. When repairing an old mill, if he can't find a replacement part, he simply makes whatever he needs.

The 65-year-old Rose rebuilds 20 or more old mills a year.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rose Windmill Service, Box 284, Girard, Kansas 66743 (ph 800 339-4802 or 620 724-0083).



Harry Rose Jr. buys, sells and repairs old windmills, such as this Dempster model. If he can't find a replacement part, he just makes whatever he needs.