

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



Arnold Kornegay and Virgil Wall grow and sell unwashed gourds directly out of the field. They produce about 20 different varieties of hard-shell gourds.

Texas Ranch Thrives On Gourds

Growing gourds has turned into a profitable business for 77-year-old Arnold Kornegay at 7K Bar Ranch near Gause, Texas. The funny thing is, he and his cousin, Virgil Wall, got into the business by accident.

"I bought a package of birdhouse gourd seed at Wal-Mart, and after growing them, I cut holes out to make purple martin houses," he says. "After I shook the seeds out of them, I swept the seeds out of the door of the shop. They sprouted and next season I had more gourds than I knew what to do with. So I strung them up on a line between two posts. I put up a sign and people started stopping."

He and Virgil produce about 20 varieties

of hard-shell gourds. They come in many shapes, sizes and textures, according to Kornegay. The bigger the selection he offers, the better it is for business.

Kornegay grows, harvests and sells unwashed gourds directly out of the field. People turn them into birdhouses, bowls, or candleholders and some paint them.

Last year, Kornegay and his cousin planted nine acres of gourds. His sales have averaged more than \$1,000 per month over the past 13 months. This was his third year in business.

"I was very surprised by the income these gourds have generated. I'm making more than a lot of people who have jobs," he says. "It helps that I'm located right along Hwy. 79. It's quite extensively traveled. The other

day I had one guy from New York who bought \$250 worth of gourds to paint and resell."

Kornegay says gourds are a little bit difficult to grow because they require so much water. They must be irrigated every other day. He adds that it's necessary to go out into the field everyday and set newly formed gourds up on end so they will be flat on the bottom as they grow.

The plants grow 40-ft. vines and the gourds are left in the field to dry for four months before being picked and sorted into similar groups for pricing.

Kornegay sets them out in his yard on 16 ft. long tables he made out of cattle panels. Prices range from \$1 to \$12, with special ones

bringing a premium of \$15 to \$20.

"Our business is on the honor system, so if we're not at home, people can come in and pick out what they want. I have an old breadbox that is locked which I cut a slit on the end of. I call it the bank and put out a sign telling people to put their money in it," he explains.

He produces some extra-large gourds by placing an IV in the stem and letting it drip water. One big gourd is perfectly shaped, about 4 ft. around, and weighed 150 lbs. green, but only 10 to 12 pounds dry.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Arnold Kornegay, 12231 E Highway 79, Gause, Texas 77857 (ph 979 279-2528; email: sevenkbarranch@aol.com).

Mini-Dairy Goats Catching On Fast

The desire for smaller dairy goats inspired development of Mini-Nubians.

They're ideal for people with smaller farms who want a smaller dairy animal that takes less space and feed, but still gives back milk for the family, according to Susan and Vencil Selvage of Whispering Pines Farm at Ferrum, Va., who raise and sell Mini-Nubians.

The small goats are a cross between Nigerian Dwarfs and full-size Nubians, both of which are dairy goat breeds.

Mini-Nubians are one of six miniature dairy goat breeds that are currently being developed by interested breeders like the Selvages. All are encompassed by the Miniature Dairy Goat Association, based in Corvallis, Ore.

Registrar Jeanne Carson says the size of all these various existing dairy breeds is being reduced by crossing with the Nigerian Dwarf, and each one is being transformed into a new and miniature version of the breed.

"The first generation is called a 50/50. When you breed two 50/50's, you get a second generation. The first and second generations are called experimentals because the breed characteristics you get aren't consistent yet. You keep selecting from each generation for the breed traits you want," according to Carson. "You can apply for purebred registration on third generation animals that have produced at least one offspring. Both they and their offspring must meet the association's breed criteria."

She says the registry has been in existence for eight years. There are only 15 registered Mini-Nubians in the purebred herd book (registry) so far, but there are close to 2,500 animals in the experimental registry (mostly Mini-Nubians and Mini-Lamancha), so a lot more purebred registrations are expected this year. Registry personnel decide if stock is eligible for regis-



Mini-Nubian dairy goats are ideal for people with smaller farms, say Vencil and Susan Selvage of Ferrum, Va.

tration by viewing pictures and documentation sent in by the breeders.

There are many reasons why miniature dairy goats are catching on, according to Carson. The traditional purebred dairy goat breeds have been pushing for greater stature in the show ring, which has resulted in all the dairy goat breeds getting larger in recent years. Smaller goats are easier for children and seniors to handle and are in demand for the pet market.

"Feed costs are rising and a smaller goat can often produce two thirds as much milk as a standard dairy goat while often consuming only half the amount of feed," she says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Whispering Pines Farm, Vencil and Susan Selvage, 3080 Turners Creek Rd., Ferrum, Va. 24088 (ph 540 365-1696; email: sselvage@cablenet-va.com; sselvage22@yahoo.com; website: www.geocities.com/dixemininubians) or Jeanne Carson, Registrar, Miniature Dairy Goat Association, 24144 Decker Rd., Corvallis, Ore. 97333(ph/fax 541 929-3500; email: inavale@earthlink.net; website: www.geocities.com/miniaturedairygoats.com.)



Randy Sowers and his family run an old-fashioned creamery and retail store. They also sell home-raised beef, pork and chicken.

Farm Dairy Cuts Out The Middleman

Randy Sowers and his family of Middletown, Md., run an old-fashioned creamery and retail store, selling milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream and eggs. They've also started selling home-raised beef, pork and chicken. In addition, they provide a home delivery service to almost 800 homes per week.

In 2001, the Sowers bought their own production equipment and their first delivery truck. After 20 years of selling to a local coop, they wanted more independence, control, higher profitability and the challenge that comes with it.

They now process and direct-market two days or 20,000 lbs. of the production from their 250-cow, 1,500-acre dairy farm.

This brings returns of about \$48 per hundred weight, compared to sometimes as low as \$10 after deductions from milk sold to the co-operative.

The family raises their own replacement cows and has 1,200 chickens for "farm fresh" egg production. They also raise their own broiler chickens - 30 to 50 at a time, and hire a family friend to raise 20 to 30 hogs. The beef they sell comes from Holstein cows that are out of production, and all animals are raised in an all-natural environment. They do

all of their own slaughtering and butchering as well.

Sowers' delivery service caters to an area within a 60-mi. radius, and includes many homes in the suburban communities outside Baltimore and Washington.

Besides their own products, the South Mountain Creamery retail store, also located in Middletown, carries a variety of food products made by similar, non-competing operations.

The whole operation employs 10 people outside the six-member family.

"About 60 percent of our income is from home delivery sales, 30 percent from the retail store, and the last 10 percent is earned by selling at farmers' markets and through a few outside retail stores that carry our products," Sowers says. "Our milk prices are competitive with what supermarkets are charging for hormone-free milk."

Contact: South Mountain Creamery, Randy Sowers, 8305 Bolivar Rd., Middletown, Md. 21769 (ph 301 371-8565; fax 301 371-5936; email: milkdelivery@adelphia.net; website: www.southmountaincreamery.com).