

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income

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 page.

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 email us at: editor@farmshow.com.

They Use The Internet To Boost Farm Income

The internet is the perfect place to promote farm products, say Sandy and Ron Tombaugh of Streator, Ill. The couple uses two websites to market their own farm products, as well as those of other vendors like themselves.

Ron sells hay and straw on www.darthay.com, while Sandy offers a wide array of items on the "American Farm Goods Website," at www.farmgoods.com.

"It's usually a struggle for small farms like ours to generate enough income, so we've found ways to add value to our products and offer them to a bigger audience. We believe that many people without daily access to a farm, are looking for the products that we and our fellow farmers produce," Sandy explains. "We've had our websites for over three years now, and they help get our name and products out there."

The Tombaughs sell hay and straw in a variety of ways, from big round bales to ordinary square bales to miniature "baby bales."

The couple has three mini balers, and each makes a different size bale: 5 by 7 by 12-in., 6 by 6 by 12-in., and 2 by 3 by 5-in. Each of the balers requires two or three people to operate, and they produce about 30 bales per hour.

"They are quite labor intensive but with three balers, we now have a capacity of 188,000 bales per year," Sandy says. "We're hoping to sell them wholesale by the pallet (8 dozen) to places like pumpkin farms and orchards."

The Tombaughs purchased all three mini balers from various online sources such as eBay.

"The first baler took me two years to find and was out in Texas. It cost me \$3,500 and another \$1,000 to have it shipped here. The other two balers came from Michigan," Sandy points out.

Baby straw bales can be used for mulch or bedding for small pets, and the baby alfalfa bales make good guinea pig and rabbit food (they're being sold in pet stores.) All the bales are excellent for crafts, and kids love them for handling with their toy farm equipment. They're also just the right size for horse enthusiasts as treats.

Mini bales sell for \$4 retail, with discounts for quantity orders since they prefer to ship in dozen-bale lots. The baby bales wholesale at \$2.50 each.

Other straw products the couple offer include wreaths and barley straw packed in 10 by 30-in. polypropylene mesh bags for killing algae on farm ponds. According to Ron, the bags won't disintegrate, are easily refilled, and allow water to flow freely through the straw.

"We even have some water treatment plants that buy 150 to 200 square bales of barley straw a year," he says.

Another unique item that the couple offers is a barn-shaped cardboard gift box that's made to hold six jars of jam. When it's shipped, the box folds down into a rect-



The Tombaughs use two websites to market a wide variety of their farm products, including miniature hay and straw bales.



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angular shape, but the top of the box flips up to form a hip roof.

Other products featured on the Tombaugh's website include apple and pumpkin butter, honey, candy, dressings, chutney, fruit spreads, whole grain flour, jams and jellies, mustard, preserves and sauces.

Other farmers can list products on the website by paying a small commission fee to the Tombaughs.

"We're still expanding our group of vendors, and hope to become a one-stop farm shopping outlet," Sandy says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Farm Goods, Sandy and Ron Tombaugh, 1240 N. Illinois Route 18, Streator, Ill. 61364 (ph/fax 309 531-HAAY (4229) or 815 672-3066; amerfarmgoods@yahoo.com; www.farmgoods.com).



Carl Veldhuizen makes small bales using a mini stationary baler that's powered by a model "hit and miss" gas engine that he put together from a kit.

Miniature Balers More Popular Than Ever

Carl Veldhuizen, Plymouth, Minn., makes small bales using a mini stationary baler that's powered by a model "hit and miss" gas engine that he put together from a kit. The baler is scaled after a 1930 wire hand-tie, stationary model.

The 1/4 hp, double flywheel engine runs on Coleman lantern fuel and is used to belt-drive the baler's plunger. It mounts on a small wooden box.

The baler makes bales that measure 4 in. long by 2 1/2 in. wide and are tied with two 22-ga. wires.

"The engine came from a kit but it still took a lot of work to get everything to fit and timed right," says Veldhuizen. "The engine's original aluminum piston didn't develop enough compression so I replaced it with a cast iron piston. I got the baler from a man in Minnesota who no longer sells the baler. I made a small wagon and a bigger horse-drawn hay rack.

"I bought the engine kit in 1980 for \$200. The same kit would probably sell for \$2,000 or \$3,000 today. I made my own flywheels. The engine has a coil ignition and points, just like on a car. The coil is located under the box and is wired to a 6-volt battery, which is used for the spark just like on a car."

With a real stationary baler, loose hay was pitched off a wagon and into the baler. One person stood on each side of the bale chamber. One pushed the wire through, and the other pushed it back again to tie it.

"Years ago I used shredded money to make the bales, which resulted in bales with a nice dark green color. However, you can't get shredded money from the government any more," says Veldhuizen.

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Ben and Mary Rudolph use a hand-powered, 1/16-scale mini baler to make tiny bales.

Tiniest Bales We've Ever Seen

Ben and Mary Rudolph use a hand-powered, 1/16-scale mini baler to make bales that measure only 2 1/2 in. long by 1 1/4 in. wide. The baler was made by an inventor "out east" who's no longer in business.

The baler is equipped with a small opening on top that you shove the hay into, and a lever that you pull on to push material forward into the bale chamber. The bales are tied with wire. The Rudolph's have used straw, hay, and red cedar to make bales.

They've sold some of the bales they make to Al's Toys at the Mall of America in Minnesota.

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Mini bales measure only 2 1/2 in. long by 1 1/4 in. wide.