

## Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



Larry Mills and his wife Rhonda sell topsoil from their farm.

### “Dirt Farmers” Make Money Selling Soil

Larry Mills and his wife Rhonda are dirt farmers. For the past six years, they have been selling topsoil from their farm, using a remodeled 50,000 bu. grain bin to store it.

“I didn’t like pulling tarps over topsoil in the rain,” says Larry Mills. “If we didn’t use the bin for this, we would have sold it for scrap. We can store about 3,500 cu. yards inside the bin and in an old 55 by 100-ft. Quonset.”

Surrounded by residential developers, they long ago accepted the fact that their farm would be developed for housing at some point. To prepare for that day they are mining sand, gravel and topsoil with the goal of improving the eventual marketability of their land.

“When the sand and gravel are gone, we will have a low banked lake of about 50 acres leaving about 100 acres of developable land around it,” explains Mills.

To harvest the topsoil from the area to be quarried, they start with an old chisel plow. It rips up the topsoil so it dries quickly. Scrapers carry it into a pile where conveyers move it into the bin. Modifications to the bin make loading and removal easy.

“We cut a 20 by 20-ft. hole in one side and framed it with some heavy steel trusses as a doorway,” recalls Mills. “Then we used the steel we cut out of the side to make a form inside the bin and filled the 5-in. gap with concrete to act as a bumper.”

Mills fabricated a 20 by 8-ft. steel door and mounted it on a set of rails. It slides up and down with the help of a loader, but can be pinned in place at any of several heights. One is 5 ft. from the floor, allowing a small skid steer loader to enter and remove dirt. The bin is filled to about the 12-ft. depth, or about 1,400 yards. Along with the dirt stockpiled in the Quonset building, it puts Mills in good shape for early spring sales. “This was the first year we came close



Conveyors move soil into a remodeled 50,000-bu. grain bin.



They cut a 20-sq. ft. hole in one side of bin and framed in a doorway with heavy steel trusses.

to selling out,” says Mills. “After five weeks of rain, we only had about 30 yards left.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Maple Valley Farms, Inc., 4022 St. Rt. 303, Mantua, Ohio 44255 (ph 330 297-7579; rockyrider@adelphia.net).

### Dual Purpose Trailer Rental

Calvin Foot of Red Willow, Alberta, designed a trailer unit that’s half dumpster and half port-a-potty. He partnered up with his brother Gilbert and their wives to produce the unit and launch a sideline business renting it out.

“All Gotta Go Ltd.” is just getting started, but the inventor says the business has generated good interest so far.

Besides being convenient and multi-purpose, the Foots say the unit is environmentally beneficial because it keeps all waste contained. There’s no garbage blowing around and farmers don’t like people going out on their fields when nature calls.

Calvin Foot got the idea while doing

backhoe work for oil and gas companies.

He and his partners hired someone to build the units for them, and then started renting them out. “We rent them out to oil companies on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, but that’s not all. They’re also popular for farm auctions, family reunions, homecomings and any other outdoor gatherings. Everyone has garbage and needs a washroom sooner or later,” Calvin says.

“Employers are required to make toilet facilities available to their workers,” Calvin’s wife Rita adds. “This unit solves that problem and lets you dispose of garbage at the same time.”

The Foots designed the self-dumping, 6-

### Easy-To-Make Farmer’s Market Sign

“I see a lot of farm market signs on the side of the road that look ramshackle,” says George Hubka. “It’s hard to get top prices if your signs don’t look good.”

The Dowling, Mich., farmer made a sign out of 10-ft. lengths of 1 1/2-in. dia. pvc pipe and a 10-ft. length of 1-in. pvc. He also used two 1 1/2-in. elbows, eight 1 1/2 by 1-in. tees, and four 6 by 26-in. lengths of 3/16-in. thick foam board.

Hubka made four openings to hold foam board signs, which are held in place by slots cut lengthwise into the horizontal pvc pipes.

His wife used 3-in. colored adhesive letters to design each panel. “She even added reflective tape on it so cars could see it at night,” he says.

The legs of the sign slip over two regular steel fence posts. “It’s durable and easy for me to change if I run out of something,” he says. “At night I just cover the sign up with a garbage bag so people know we’re closed.”



Sign is made out of 10-ft. lengths of pvc pipe, with four openings to hold foam board signs.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, George Hubka, 3691 Bristol Oaks, Dowling, Mich. 49050 (ph 269 721-3830; fax 269 721-4151; geo\_mgnews@yahoo.com).

### Wood Pellet Business Is Hot

Dogwood Energy got into the wood pellet business as a backup, but it became a moneymaker on its own. Bill Sasher originally set up his company to market ethanol stills, but discovered the market for wood pellets might be even better.

“We found a niche in the wood pellet business and it not only supplemented the ethanol business, it became our main thrust,” says Shelly McClanahan, Sasher’s daughter and spokesperson for Dogwood Energy.

The company works both ends of the wood pellet business, selling pelletizers (ranging from \$800,000 to \$2,000,000 for a turnkey operation) but also selling wood pellets.

“We sell direct to consumers,” explains McClanahan. “We have very high quality pellets made with 90 percent hardwood and no fillers or additives. They burn with less than 1 percent ash and 1/2 percent fine particles.”

Dogwood Energy delivers truckloads of palletized pellets from California to New York. Prices vary from \$289 to \$379 per ton for a minimum 2-ton order and as much as an additional \$90 delivery fee, depending on the state. Pellets come 50 bags to a shrink-wrapped pallet.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dog-



Dogwood Energy sells both wood pellets (above) and the machines to make them.



wood Energy, LLC, 301 N. Jackson St., P.O. Box 875, Tullahoma, Tenn. 37388 (ph 931 563-2308; dogwoodenergy@gmail.com; www.dogwoodenergy.com).



As a sideline business, the Foots rent out this trailer unit, which is half dumpster and half port-a-potty.

by 6-ft. steel dumpster box and have them manufactured locally. The box sits at the back of the trailer, while a commercial port-a-potty mounts up front.

The dumpster has an electric-over-hydraulic-hoist that tilts the dumpster to unload it. The battery and hoist controls are located in an enclosed box near the hitch.

When the unit is full, you hook it behind your pickup, take it to the local dump, flip the lever, tip the hoist up, and drive away,

leaving your garbage behind.

When the port-a-potty needs emptying, the Foots say it’s easy to take it to the local septic tank cleaner.

The Foots welcomes rental rate inquiries and say they intend to offer a variety of sizes (dumpster boxes) in the future.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, All Gotta Go Ltd., Calvin and Rita Foot, Box 8, Red Willow, Alberta, Canada T0B 3V0 (ph 403 742-1037 or 403 740-5629 (cell)).