

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.

“Decorative Corn” Adds Value To Crop

Two years ago George Hubka found a way to make money marketing corn silk (Vol. 29, No 1). Now the Dowling, Mich., man is marketing ordinary ears of corn as a low cost substitute to Indian Corn.

“When we saw the price local retail stores were charging for Indian Corn, my wife and I felt we could provide a lower cost substitute from our field corn crop. We made samples of our product, which we call ‘Decco Corn’, and visited area stores to determine the level of interest and to secure orders for the product. Our Decco Corn creates a high return, value-added product from our corn crop. We hope to increase our gross income to \$3,000 plus per acre from our field corn crop.”

In FARM SHOW's original report, we told how Hubka sells bundles of dried field corn silk packaged in Ziploc bags to ethnic food stores and retail craft shops. The silks are “pulled” from the end of the corn ears before the crop is harvested. Customers buy the corn silk for making tea, art and craft projects, and making holiday decorations.

“Decco Corn” consists of three ears of field corn, with the husks attached and tied together in a bundle using colored ribbon. “We market the bundles for 75 cents to stores, which then mark them up to sell at \$1.50 retail. Stores sell them for about 50 percent less than Indian Corn,” says Hubka.

Production requires hand harvesting of the corn ears at maturity after the husk has loosened. “We try to harvest bright colored ears that are filled to the tip,” says Hubka. “When picking ears, we make sure that most of the husks are harvested with each ear. Having an adequate quantity and quality of husks with each ear is necessary to make the Decco Corn bundle attractive and durable for hanging up. Once harvested, we store the ears in a well ventilated crib or



Three ordinary ears of corn, with husks attached, are tied together in a bundle using colored ribbon.

storage area to prevent molding of the husk prior to bundling.”

Bundle processing involves three steps. First, the ear is inspected as the husk is pulled toward the butt of the ear to fully expose the kernels. Only ears that have an attractive color and are filled to the tip are selected for placement in the bundling rack, for matching with other ears of the same size. Next, the husks of the various groups of three ears are held tightly as they're securely tied with colored ribbon. Complimentary second colored ribbons can be used and draped down to add attractiveness to the bundle. Last, the finished Decco Corn bundles are packed tip down into delivery boxes for transport to retailers.

Regular Decco Corn is marketed during the fall. “To increase marketing we found that painted-on words or logos could be used to customize bundles for schools, universities, and companies. Customized bundles have been displayed in homes and offices, at a community college, at football tailgate parties, and so forth,” says Hubka, who was a finalist with the idea in the national Farm Bureau invention contest.

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

Make Your Own Fishing Lures

Making plastic fishing lures is a snap with a kit from Jann's Netcraft. Heat the plastic, pour it in the mold, and pop a fresh lure out in a few minutes.

“We generally sell our kits to fishermen who are looking for something unique, maybe a custom color or a special scent or fish attractant,” says Bob Barnhart.

Jann's Netcraft sells hundreds of hard-to-find items for the do-it-yourselfer fisherman, including materials for making plastic lures such as molds, injectors, liquid plastic, colors and even some scents believed to attract fish. Items can be bought individually or in a kit. Scents sold include garlic, salt, and anise. Barnhart says there are other scents available from other companies, including fish oils and pheromones.

“Some people try to emulate baits that are commercially available,” he says. “A lot of fishermen gain confidence in a lure with a certain look or scent. Our kits let them tailor a specific bait to a specific scent and then fine tune it over time until they come up with a bait that's perfect for them.”



Netcraft's kit for making artificial worms.

Netcraft's worm-making kit sells for \$48.95. It includes injector, molds, instructions, coloring, glitter and soft plastic. The user mixes ingredients, including scents, and heats them to about 350 degrees to inject into the molds. Molds are included for a 2-in. whirltail grub, a 2-in. splittail grub, a 3.5-in. trout worm, a 3-in. whirltail grub, a 4-in. augie and a 7-in. hooktail.

“This kit is very easy to use,” says Barnhart. “Anybody can make lures with our molds the first time out.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jann's Netcraft, P.O. Box 89, Dept. FFG, Maumee, Ohio 43537 (ph 800 638-2723; techsupport@jannsnecraft.com; www.jannsnecraft.com).

“Relief” Milking A Good Family Sideline

Based on the premise that dairy farmers deserve to have a life away from their dairy farms, Paul and Jody Wendt have established a thriving part-time business doing “relief” milking for dairymen who need a break.

Both Paul and Jody grew up on dairy farms and Paul worked on his dad's dairy for many years, so he says milking is in his blood. He also works full-time as assistant manager of a dairy feed store. Jody helps out when needed with milking so he can continue with both jobs.

After taking care of a herd for a friend, word spread that the Wendt's were capable and willing to provide milking services, and they got more clients. They've been doing it now for four years and have about 25 regular clients. Most of their customers have 100 cows or less.

Their charges are based on the number of cows to be milked, plus they have a per hour labor price for doing extra miscellaneous chores other than milking. They also charge a mileage fee, although they work primarily within a 50-mile radius of home.

To familiarize himself with a new client's chore regime, he assists the farmer with chores the night before the farmer leaves.

“I wash and disinfect myself when I arrive and leave every farm, and the dairymen know that I treat their place just like it was my own.”



Paul and Jody Wendt have a thriving part-time business doing “relief” milking for dairymen who need a break.

Paul points out. “I also make sure I'm available an extra day before and after the planned job, just in case the farmer needs to leave earlier than expected, or is late getting back.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, PJ's Milking Service, Paul and Jody Wendt, 26083 626th St., Theilman, Minn. 55945 (ph 651 565-4769 or 651 380-1659).

On-Line Parts Business Booming

Need a part for an old tractor? If you can't find it locally, on-line parts websites are a good place to look. Tractor parts websites are doing big business, but the personal touch is still vital, says one tractor parts web entrepreneur.

“We're a service organization,” says Jamie Wells, owner and founder of Falcon Industries. “A lot of people don't know exactly what they need. They can give the make and model of the tractor and describe what's torn up, and we tell them what part they need.”

Wells got his first order for a part in 2001. This past year his Falcon Industries, based in Glasgow, Ky., sold more than a million parts. The real secret to success is telephone operators who know how to work with customers and with a software system that tracks parts and more.

“There are a lot of tractor parts websites out there,” says Wells. “We take pride in trying to cover all makes and models. If we don't have the part listed, we will try to find it.”

Wells started Falcon Industries by selling his grandfather's parts inventory. His grandfather had retired from more than 50 years in tractor repair. He told Wells he only wanted to recover his costs. Wells could keep the profits. Local sales were poor, and then he got on the internet in 2001.

“Timing was right,” says Wells, who watched demand and his resulting parts inventory explode. The problem he ran into was that an aftermarket part might fit two or three different brands and multiple tractors within each brand. He needed to track it by his parts number and by the different parts numbers on each brand.

After one false start with software, he found a system called ACCTivate that lets

his operators record a customer's parts number by his specific make and model. The system automatically lets the operator pull and ship that same part by Falcon's inventory stocking number, yet invoice the customer with his parts number. Orders on-line are handled the same with the customer only needing to know his parts number.

Wells advises anyone thinking of doing internet sales to find a good software system. Not only does having the system keep his costs low and customers happy, it also tracks customer order history. “We have thousands of customers, and this system helps us keep up with them because everything is in one system,” says Wells. “We know what's going on when someone has an issue.”

The toughest part of his business, he admits, is keeping up with an ever-expanding inventory. “For example, we have the largest selection of tractor decals in the world, manufacturing most of them, and we are constantly adding more,” says Wells.

Falcon is currently home to four websites: www.tractorpartsinc.com, www.8tractors.co, www.fordtractortpart.com and www.ford-tractor.us. Wells plans to soon add two more websites and a traditional printed parts catalog for customers without access to the internet.

Toll-free callers can order a limited number of parts for implements. That is something Wells hopes to expand to the internet.

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