

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.



Richard Hein's Harvestore silo, broken down into sections, now holds fish instead of dry corn.

Dairy Farmer's Silos Now Filled With Fish

When Richard Hein, Athens, Wis., quit milking cows, he didn't get rid of his silos. He just changed what he put in them. His Harvestore silo, broken down into sections, now holds fish instead of dry corn.

"I raise the fish in 50 to 60 mostly 1/2-acre ponds, but when it's time to deliver them I put them in the tanks," says Hein.

His fish ponds are sloped from 2 ft. deep at one end to 8 ft. deep at the other. Most are 60 ft. by 360 ft. in size, although a few are up to two acres. Each one is filled with surface runoff water directed to them by berms or pumped in from collection ditches. Each pond has a drain, so water levels can be lowered to concentrate fish in the deep end for netting and removal.

His eight Harvestore storage tanks are 14 ft. in diameter and 3 ft. deep.

"I poured four inches of cement inside each tank and installed a drain and an overflow pipe to maintain water levels," says Hein. "With the fish waste, they are self sealing."

Hein raises a variety of game fish found in lakes and rivers in Wisconsin, including minnows, perch, bluegill, crappie, small-mouth and largemouth bass, walleye and catfish. Some, like the minnows, walleye and catfish, are purchased for resale. He will buy 6 to 8-in. walleye, feed them up and resell. The others are bred and raised on site.

He started the business as a sideline to dairy cows, digging out two ponds and stocking them. Gradually he grew the business, adding ponds until he felt he could sell the cows and farm fish full-time.

"I sell all my fish to private buyers to put in their ponds," he says. "It took a year or two before the business started growing. Now it's pretty hard to get enough fish."

Many people like to stock their ponds in the spring when the ice goes out. Hein's other big season is October when temperatures have cooled down. Transferring the fish when it's cool reduces stress and disease. It's during sales seasons that he moves fish out of the ponds and into the Harvestore tanks for easy access and handling.

Most of the fish he sells are in the 4 to 9-in. range, depending on species, but some

are larger. Most are sold in lots of 200 to 2,000. An 8-in. bass can bring \$2.50, depending on supply and demand. If Hein has excess, the price drops. If demand exceeds supply, the price rises. The bigger the fish, the more it costs.

"Some people want big mature bass and 15 to 16-in. walleye," he says. "I'll even let people come in and fish 'em out and take home the ones they want."

Hein maintains ponds with breeding stock of perch, crappies and bass. He removes the eggs or, in the case of bass, the young fry and raises them in separate ponds away from the large fish that would eat them.

As much as possible, Hein prefers to go with natural production methods. While intensive operations might shoot for 100,000 perch in a 1/2-acre pond, he opts for fewer fish and more ponds.

"I like to see 2,000 to 3,000 bass in 1/2 acre," he says.

While he does a little supplemental feeding, he relies mostly on pond life to feed his fish. While intensive pond or tank production might be faster in terms of gain, he says it also requires more labor and constant testing of nitrates and oxygen levels. Mistakes are easy and unforgiving.

"They say if you haven't killed a million fish, you're not a fish farmer," he says. "It's nothing to kill a whole pond of fish. You just have to learn from your mistakes."

Hein has also learned about predators. Fish farmers have to deal with herons and even otters. He hangs moving objects in the air over and around ponds to scare them away. Simply being around the ponds every day keeps many predators away. Hein's aeration windmills, which he builds for his own use and for sale, help too.

"I have 21 windmills spinning around the ponds," he explains. "They seem to keep predators away as well as anything."

Hein sells the aeration windmills for \$1,300 to \$1,400 installed. "I build about 50 a year," he says. "Like the fish, I don't advertise. I just sell them by word of mouth."

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Farm equipment is packed into shipping containers for export overseas.

Used Equipment Exports Booming

Business is booming for sales of used farm equipment to eastern Europe, says Peter Chykaliuk, Cajo, Inc.

"We buy from large machinery dealers in Illinois, Iowa and Michigan," he says. "It's pretty much equipment that's not in demand any more. But the business is good for U.S. farmers. One dealer told me he can offer \$1,000 to \$2,000 more in trade-in value to his customers because of the export market."

Chykaliuk maintains a refurbishing plant in the Ukraine where he sends the used equipment. There the Deere planters, Great Plains drills and other equipment is stripped, repaired and rebuilt.

"We deal with several lines and market largely in the Ukraine and Russia," he says. "We totally recondition the pieces so we can give them a 100 percent guarantee. We've taken really horrific pieces of equipment and made them nice."

Export sales have turned into a good business for Chykaliuk, who started with it in the 1980's. He warns that it's not something to just jump into and there are major pitfalls like parts availability in the receiving country.

Just breaking down equipment for the most efficient loading of a shipping container is important. Equally important is establishing credit lines with customers. Unfortunately, Chykaliuk says some exporters have taken advantage of overseas customers.

"There's a lot of junk sent overseas and buyers in those countries don't necessarily know what to check for," he says. "A lot of my customers have been sold a planter or sprayer from the United States and end up asking me to refurbish it because it's inoperable."

Chykaliuk isn't interested in buying equipment from the market at large. Like a farmer, he has equipment dealers he has developed trusting relationships with and those are his preferred suppliers.

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Skunk Expert Details Odorless Skunk Removal

Wildlife control expert Rob Erickson offers never-before-shared advice on "groundbreaking odorless skunk control methods" in his new book, *"Innovative Skunk Control."*

Erickson has been providing odorless skunk removal for 35 years and with 10,000 skunks to his credit, the Cortland, Ill. man is considered a national expert on the subject.

"My book describes in clear detail how to deal with skunks in all possible situations," Erickson says. "It includes removal methods for skunks damaging lawns by digging for grubs, skunks trapped in window wells and inside buildings, and skunks roaming the neighborhood."

He says many professional nuisance animal trappers will turn down skunk business because of apprehension about skunks spraying. That's the reason he wrote this book, he says - he wants to help make the job easier and more effective.

According to Erickson, late July through November is the best time to control skunks.

"They do the most commercial property damage in the fall when they come out to dig

for grubs. This usually happens within a half hour after dusk — you can set your clock by it — and they're very focused on what they are doing, which allows you to approach them as close as 4 to 5 feet away before they notice you," he explains. "It's still important to note that skunks can spray a distance of 8 to 10 feet, and up to 15 feet if the wind is at their back."

In addition to talking about how to shoot skunks, the book also discusses the different types of traps and other control methods. It includes a description of skunk biology, population cycles and behavior as well.

Innovative Skunk Control sells for \$15.95 plus \$3.85 shipping.

For the past 14 years, Erickson and his wife, Lisa, have also published a bi-monthly magazine, *"Wildlife Control Technology."*

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