

## Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



Drill-powered machine turns a potato into one long curly strip.

### Curly Fries Sell Like Hotcakes

If you're looking for a part-time money-making venture, you might want to consider making curly fries, says Dr. Bill Beyers, Oconee, Ill. Last year he made curly fries at a local church festival using a simple drill-powered device and they were a big hit. He says the unusual treat would do well at any local fair or festival.

One potato will produce a plateful of curly fries, all connected to each other. According to the company that makes the curly fry machine, an order of curly fries sells for \$5 in most areas.

The concept of making curly fries is simple enough. The machine works somewhat like a small auger. An electric drill turns the cutter and cuts away a layer at a time from the potato, producing a plate filled with one long ribbon when it's done. The ribbon is then immersed in boiling oil. The company makes two models, both



The sight of deep-fried potato "ribbon" quickly attracts business to stand.

stainless steel, powered by 3/8-in. cordless electric drills (included). The Ribbon Potato Cutter mounts on a custom table and sells for \$275 plus \$20 S&H (U.S.). The Curly Fry Potato Cutter comes with an extra battery and charger. It mounts on rocker legs for easy operation. It sells for \$349 plus \$20 S&H.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ribbon Fries (ph 605 996-7637; bears rus@mit.midco.net).

### New Processes Turn Manure Into Gold

If you thought composting was the best way to increase the value of manure, just wait until you see what "processing" does. Two companies that have developed patented processes that use heat and pressure to change the molecular structure of manure are Perfect Blend, Royal, Wash. and Organic Growing Systems, Inc. (OGSI), Alpharetta, Georgia.

While the techniques used by the two companies differ, both claim similar results. The finished products they sell feed soil microbes, reduce the need for water, and produce healthy crops. And if they don't turn manure into gold, they come close, given the price of commercial fertilizer and the exploding demand for their products. "We can help improve the biological life of your soil to produce healthier crops," says John Marler, Perfect Blend. "Our process makes Perfect Blend an ideal slow release food source for microbes, which in turn makes the minerals in the soil more valuable to plants."

The company produces a dry, stable fertilizer with a uniform nutrient level. The process captures a high percentage of contained nutrients compared to compost or even raw manure. Perfect Blend claims one ton of its processed chicken litter is equal to 12 tons of raw chicken litter based on primary, secondary and trace mineral content.

Repeat and rapidly expanding sales appear to back up company claims. Sales have doubled the past two years and are attracting not only organic, but also conventional producers. One dealer reported going from sales of 75 tons in 2007 to sales of more than 14,000 in 2008.

Perfect Blend plans to license their technology. The goal is to build regional plants to use local supplies of manure. The com-



Two companies use heat and pressure to "process" manure into a valuable, easy-to-handle soil additive.

pany is also adapting its process to cattle and hog manure.

John Strickland, OGSI, says their company's carbonized, granulated and pelletized product won't leach or suffer atmospheric loss. He says the stable form of the 6-4-3 blend makes it equal to a non-organic commercial 15-15-15 blend in nutrient availability. OGSI also seeks to enrich the soil and feed the microbe population. Like Perfect Blend, OGSI is seeing sales skyrocket as traditional non-organic growers adopt the product. Initial sales were to golf courses, large sod farms and municipalities. This past year OGSI reports interest from row crop producers across the country.

OGSI has tripled production capacity at its Mississippi plant and is seeking additional raw product to process.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Perfect Blend, 188 106th Ave. N.E., Suite 401, Bellevue, Wash. 98004 (ph 425 456-8890 or 866 456-8890; fax 425 456-8889; info@perfect-blend.com; www.perfect-blend.com) or Organic Growing Systems, Inc., 3050 Royal Blvd. South, Suite 135, Alpharetta, Georgia 30022 (ph 800 979-6474; www.organicgrowingsystems.com).



Grain roaster is heated by propane stored in tank on front of truck bed.

### Truck-Mounted Grain Roaster

This truck-mounted grain roaster is designed to roast grain to feed livestock. It's owned by custom operator Ken Ressler of Orville, Ohio, and operated by Maurice Steiner, who drives it to farms within a 60-mile radius and is on the road six days a week, all year long.

The 16-ton rig makes quite a sight as it heads down the highway, pulling a trailer equipped with a big cooling drum.

The roaster is heated by propane stored in a tank on front of the truck bed. It reaches temperatures up to 300 degrees.

At the farm, an auger is used to load grain into the burner. Soybeans, wheat, corn and oats are the most common grains. Such grains are high in protein. It takes about 1 1/2 min. to roast a hopper full of beans, depending on the grain's moisture content.

The cooling drum is equipped with big electric fans which are powered by a gas-operated generator.

After the grain is roasted and the fans have cooled it, the grain is augered onto a dump scale that's used to weigh the dried grain. From there it goes into a wagon or truck. The farmer is charged \$40 per ton, with a \$3 discount if payment is made in eight days.

The roaster can easily do 1,500 bu. per day. Sometimes Steiner is able to visit two farms in the same day, if the jobs are small.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ken Ressler, 16808 Burkhardt Rd., Orville, Ohio 44667 (ph 330 683-0826 or 330 466-0671).



Mobile roaster keeps custom operator Ken Ressler busy all year long. Roasted grain is cooled in this drum, which is fitted with several large electric fans.

### Strawberries In A Bottle

What to do with excess berries is a problem for any berry grower. Cottle Farms just bottles them. The East Coast firm has U-pick and fresh market strawberry farms, as well as farm market stands in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. So far this year they've sold more than 10,000 bottles of strawberry cider at nine locations in addition to mail order.

"We started with the cider at the end of the 2006 strawberry season and expect it to be a season-by-season thing," says Jerry Buczek, chief operating officer, Cottle Strawberry Nursery and Farms. "We are having an exceptional production season this year, but last year there was less fruit due to frost."

FARM SHOW sampled the cider at the Organic Food Show in Chicago this past April. The 100 percent strawberry juice sweetened with sugar and some added flavor really was like biting into a fresh ripe strawberry. Buczek says the response to the beverage has been enthusiastic.

"We have people who tasted it somewhere calling up and ordering cases at a time," he says.

While the product has proven a great way add value to the company's product, Buczek warns that making strawberry cider is not for everyone. He notes that their average U-pick unit runs from four to five acres, while most



Last year Cottle Farms sold more than 10,000 bottles of strawberry cider.

U-pick operations are one to two acres in size. Buczek should know. The firm also supplies strawberry starters to retail nurseries and U-pick operations from Maryland to Ohio and south to Arkansas and Texas.

"You have to have volume to take to a bottler," he says. "It takes about a pound and a half of strawberries for every 32-oz. bottle."

Cottle Farms Strawberry Cider can be ordered by the case of 12 bottles for \$36 plus shipping.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cottle Strawberry Nursery & Farms, Inc., 2488 West NC 403 Hwy., Faison, N.C. 28341 (ph 910 267-4531; fax 910 267-0156; www.cottlefarms.com).