

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.**



Michael McKenna rents out small guest houses on his 2 1/2-acre farm near San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. "They provide my retirement income," he says.

He Builds, Rents Out 600 Sq. Ft. Guest Houses

By Michael McKenna

We own a 2 1/2-acre farm in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. I moved here 15 years ago because I was tired of shoveling snow, and the living cost is very reasonable. I raised vegetables, chickens, rabbits and turkeys but it was very difficult to make a living on a small farm.

But people loved our little farm so I came up with the idea for a 600 sq. ft. guest house. I raised the money to build it and started renting it out. It produced more income than I was making selling vegetables. Over the years I've added more guest houses so that they now provide my retirement income.

I think it could be a great way for any farm to supplement income. I really enjoy my guests through conversation, Potluck meals and friendship. Everything I grow

at the farm is available for guests to pick. It makes life easy.

The surprising part is that all my guests come from rural backgrounds and understand rural life, so there's no learning curve for them. There are a lot of people out there who crave farm life, but it may not be possible for a number of reasons. Renting a guest house costs about the same as an apartment in town and makes it affordable to enjoy farm life.

We call our little houses "Zen homes". We rent out 2 of them, along with 2 apartments in our main building.

We rent our houses year 'round. Our monthly rate is \$1,200; a 3-month rate is \$800; and the yearly rate is \$550. We prefer to rent long term. We get 330 days of sunshine a year on average, and in this climate, heating and air conditioning aren't required. We allow

Tile Finding Service Pays Off For Agronomy Consultant

Steve Hoffman and his wife Michelle have a unique business niche in Wisconsin agriculture. In a day when most agronomists and crop consultants are typically affiliated with supply co-ops, seed companies, chemical companies or laboratories, the Hoffmans are true independents who can quickly create new services as the need arises. "We started our business in 1992 with the idea of providing services and advice based on local experience and university research," says Hoffman. "This way we have non-biased information that isn't tied to any product or company."

One of the services they added most recently involves mapping existing tile lines in agricultural fields. "Locating existing tile on a farm is often difficult because of changes in land ownership, tiling by different owners and lack of a consistent mapping system," says Hoffman. "Many of the existing tile systems are concrete or clay tile that was installed 30 to 50 years ago. These older systems often need maintenance or should be replaced. Current owners need to know exactly where the old lines are."

Hoffman's company uses aerial imagery and yield monitor maps along with a farmer's knowledge of tile locations. He says, "Imagery and yield maps work well for some fields, but for many it's a long-term project to locate the lines, much like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. Thermal imagery and multispectral imagery may soon hold promise for locating lines, but our company

hasn't been able to put those technologies to work just yet."

Hoffman says he's contracted with a company to fly some demo areas with multispectral imagery for the past 2 years, but the company has struggled to deliver the imagery as promised.

Hoffman and his staff of 5 trained agronomists and scouts spend a lot of time in their client's fields to gain first-hand knowledge during the growing season. "There are usually a few days in early spring when we can see the dry lines on bare soil that show where tile exists," Hoffman says. "It's an ongoing challenge, but the service is helping farmers improve their land so they produce healthier crops and more income per acre."

Hoffman has more than 25 years of consulting experience and carries CPAg and CPCC-I certifications. He and his wife along with their staff attend numerous classes, school and industry meetings over the course of a year to keep current on issues and technologies. Their company offers full service crop consulting, precision ag services, develops nutrient management plans, sets up and checks planters, provides GPS and GIS mapping services and soil sampling.

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guests to have dogs and cats.

I'm a stone mason by trade, and my small houses take about 2 months to build. They have a center load-bearing wall that acts as a divider for the kitchen/living room and the bath/closet/bedroom. The walls have a Styrofoam core so they're extremely well-insulated. The 4-in. thick insulation is rated at R7 per inch, which results in an R28 rating with 4 in. of insulation. I plaster 2 in. of concrete over wire mesh on each side. With a coat of paint periodically, the houses are

virtually maintenance-free.

A house with only 600 sq. ft. may seem small, but it's actually very livable. I find the houses are easy to rent. In fact, we have room for 4 more rental houses on our property.

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She Bakes And Sews On The Farm

When Katy Kassian learned to make biscotti in California with her Italian grandmother, she had no idea that one day she'd be making and selling the tasty treats from a North Dakota farm. Already marketing to local coffee shops, and through her website, the rural entrepreneur hopes to open her on-farm store, Buffalo Gals Mercantile, in 2015.

Biscotti may not be native to North Dakota, but it is popular with coffee shop customers in a state with people who take great pride in buying locally made foods, Kassian says. She gives them 40 flavor choices, from Traditional Almond to White Buffalo with macadamia nuts and white chocolate to Neapolitan with chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.

It's not the only thing she whips up in her kitchen. Kassian makes cookies and puts together baskets with Mojo Roast coffee (www.mojoroast.com) roasted by a friend. She also sews - BoHo style purses, totes and handbags from repurposed feed/seed and coffee burlap bags and children's toys, aprons and anything else customers want.

The entrepreneur started her on-farm

business after she and her husband moved from Colorado to Regan, N. Dak., about 45 miles northeast of Bismarck. After 30 years experience in hospitality and growing tired of long drives to work, she decided to capitalize on her sewing and baking skills.

She was inspired and mentored by Jo Khalifa, Mojo Roast owner, who also lives in North Dakota, and as business owners they enjoy doing charity events together.

Kassian's sales are about 50/50 between online and local businesses. Attending regional shows and events provide the visibility for her to get her biscotti and cookies into a retail store.

She plans to carry her baked and sewn items in her store as well as products from other area entrepreneurs to create an old fashioned mercantile store. She may offer baking and sewing classes if there is demand for it.

With a lot of hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and a 100-year-old biscotti recipe, Kassian says running a business from the farm has been a good move. Besides taking care of the business, she is available to help her husband with the farm.



After she and her husband moved from Colorado to North Dakota, Katy Kassian capitalized on her sewing and baking skills to start her on-farm business.

"You can live anywhere at any age and start a business," she says.

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