

Giant Vending Machine Sells Corn 24/7

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Instead of selling corn and other grain to an elevator, here's a new way to sell it direct to the public without having to deal with customers. Corn Xpress™ is a giant vending machine open 24/7 that accepts cash or credit cards.

A trio of Mississippi medical professionals came up with the idea thanks to their passion for the outdoors and hunting. It was the result of a brainstorming session between Dr. James Hall and Chip Chisholm, who's a registered nurse and avid deer hunter. Chisholm noted that it would be handy to have a vending machine for corn so he could make purchases day or night. In 2011, the partners hired an engineer to design two models – one that holds 260 bushels and one that holds 340. Medical sales representative, Dan Barnes, joined the new business, bringing organizational and marketing skills.

"Our user-friendly units dispense fresh grain on demand without an attendant," Hall says. "Our business approach is to

manufacture the Corn Xpress vending machines and sell distributorships. Buyers own the machine and set prices based on local markets."

Hall says that until now people who need to buy corn for wildlife or to feed livestock must do so within typical business hours. That's a problem with today's busy schedules. With Corn Xpress they can buy at their own convenience.

Because the vending machines eliminate middlemen, the producer nets more profit, Hall notes. In Mississippi, for example, corn sells at the elevator for about \$3.50/bushel. Selling it through the vending machine for about 20 cents/lb. – or about \$11 per bushel – farmers can increase gross profits per bushel. Corn Xpress is actually set up to sell by the gallon in quantities of 5, 10, 33 and 55 gal., depending on the bucket or barrel customers want filled.

An unloading auger feeds into trucks or trailers. Just a standard 120 AC volt plug is required to run the vending machine, so it can be set up at any high traffic location, such as a convenience store or local co-op.

Hall notes that Corn Xpress can also dispense other grains, pellets, and even rock salt.

Cost for either model is right at \$40,000, which includes delivery and setup, sales support, and maintenance. Depending on the location, return on investment can be as soon as 18 to 24 months, Hall says.

Two Corn Xpress units have been set up in Mississippi, and the partners are ready to team up with more entrepreneurs.



Corn Xpress is a giant vending machine that dispenses fresh corn on demand. An unloading auger feeds into trucks, trailers, or buckets.



Machine accepts cash or credit cards.

For more information, contact: Dr. James Hall (ph 601-320-3922 or email jamesjoyhall@aol.com); Dan Barnes (ph 601-573-9784); or Chip Chisholm (ph 601-720-9757). Or go to the company website at www.cornxpress.com or Facebook page.



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Hand Seeder Saves Time, Seeds

"You can plant much more quickly and accurately, with very few wasted seeds," says organic produce grower Earl Weber, who worked a couple of years with an engineer to develop the "Sow EZ" hand seeder.

It uses a seed disc to singulate seeds just like full-size farm or garden planters.

To use, fill the hopper about half full of seeds, select one of the four disc sizes, and pull the trigger to release one seed at a time.

Designed for spherical seeds, three of the disc openings work for all three sizes of pelletized seeds. The fourth is the smallest for round brassica seeds such as broccoli and kale.

In addition to starting plants in seed trays

and soil blocks, Sow EZ works well in raised beds or for spot planting in fields. The clear polycarbonate hopper holds 200 large seeds or 1,000 brassica seeds and can be emptied and reloaded within seconds.

Made in the U.S. out of durable, UV-resistant ABS plastic, Sow EZ sells for \$20 to \$25 on Weber's website and through Vesseys and Territorial Seed catalogs and online sites. Only introduced this March, Weber anticipates it will be available through more seed catalogs in the future.

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Hand seeder uses a seed disc to singulate seeds just like full-size farm or garden planters.

Mobile John Deere "Smoker Grill"

Dale Clugston likes to say that his Deere lawn tractor cooks up both food and conversation, since he converted it into a mobile "smoker grill."

The barbecue grill mounts in place of the tractor's engine. Power to move the mower is now supplied by a 12-volt electric motor and the battery out of an RV, which are used to belt-drive the hydrostatic transmission. A chrome diamond plate on one side of the grill helps dress things up.

Clugston was a Deere dealer for more than 40 years, which inspired the idea.

"It turned out a little better than I thought it would," he says. "The motor runs the transmission at about half speed, but it still has plenty of power for driving around to a cooking spot or up ramps onto a pickup or trailer.

"We can cook with this smoker grill anywhere we choose. Our favorite meats taste mighty yummy on our home patio for picnics or at camp sites with family and friends. I've even driven it in a Fourth of July parade."

He bought the 2005 Deere L120 for \$50 minus the mower deck and engine. He



Dale Clugston's barbecue grill mounts in place of the engine on his Deere lawn tractor. Power to move the mower is supplied by a 12-volt electric motor.

removed the gas tank and installed the battery and electric motor in its place. A solenoid switch is used to engage the 12-volt motor.

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