

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.

They Specialize In Rare, Organic Seeds

Gardeners interested in rare and organic seeds may want to check out Giving Ground Seeds, owned by Julie Sheen and Tyler Pratt. In addition to offering a large variety of open-pollinated seeds, the varieties are suitable for short-season climates.

"We want varieties that produce well in our climate," Sheen says of the Idaho-based business. "We have short springs and short falls."

The former garden educator at university gardens initially grew food to market but recognized a big need for seeds that thrived in the region. With Pratt, she networked with growers across the U.S. and the Seed Saver Exchange to obtain rare varieties. Some of them include tomato varieties that have become difficult to find. Many are heirlooms prior to 1950; all are open-pollinated so seeds can be saved and planted.

"We grow without chemical fertilizer and pesticides. We use no-till, so our growing practice sets us apart, and our varieties better adapt to those conditions," Sheen says. "I love short-season crops because they can thrive anywhere."

Giving Ground Seeds offers heat-tolerant tomato varieties, bolt-resistant lettuces, and other varieties that are likely to guarantee a good harvest. About 170 varieties grow on 3 acres that include weed barriers and hay tarps to smother weeds.

While some plants provide food and



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seed, such as tomatoes where seeds are wet harvested, some plants, such as carrots are grown just for their seeds. Harvest for most seeds starts in September, and the labor-intensive process includes cleaning the seeds with screens and fans.

Priced competitively, customers find old favorites and tempting new varieties of seeds available on the Giving Ground Seeds website. They offer a large variety of drought-tolerant tepary beans and unusual herbs such as sculpit and frizzy lizzy mustard. One of their newest offerings is a short-season cowpea.

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Giant Indoor Fodder-Growing System

HydroGreen sells turnkey fodder facilities for sprouting grain for feed. They recently started selling the fodder, too.

"We decided to go ahead and put up feed centers in California to introduce feeding fodder," says John Jarchow, HydroGreen. "We asked livestock producers, 'If we build the feed center, will you buy the fodder?' and they said, 'Absolutely.'"

Jarchow notes that selling the turnkey facilities to individual producers faces two challenges. The first is getting them to understand the value of the feed. The second is the cost of the system, both buildings and equipment.

"With HydroGreen fodder, you get fiber for your animals, but you also get more energy than from the unsprouted seed," says Jarchow. "Without that understanding, the cost of the feed is prohibitive. Indoor farming, with the environmental controls needed and the cost of the machinery to automate, is high."

Jarchow is confident that once livestock producers see the value received from the feed, they will recognize the value of an investment in a HydroGreen Automated Vertical Pastures System.

The concept and the system were designed by cattle producer Dohl Grohs in 2007 to give his ranches in South Dakota, Utah, and Missouri a dependable source of

high-quality feed, regardless of the weather. He came up with the concept while raising cattle in drought-prone Idaho.

The company makes several models with increasing numbers of levels. Each level is a conveyor belt eight sections long. A feed crop is grown hydroponically on each level, with one level harvested and reseeded each day. Jarchow says systems for individual ranches and farms are catching on.

"We have 14 systems out on ranches in Utah, Colorado, and Idaho that didn't have enough of the feed they grew to keep their ranches going," says Jarchow. "We have a feed center going up in Riverdale, Calif., which will produce 34 tons of feed per day with another in the planning stage."

The company previously announced a feed agreement with a 2,100-cow dairy in South Dakota to deliver 45 tons of fodder per month.

"We're working with operations in Canada, Italy, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere," says Jarchow. "Indoor farming makes sense. Feed costs are a big issue in many areas, and it takes 95 percent less water to grow the same crop indoors."

The company has mainly focused on large dairies, but that may be changing. "We're looking at servicing smaller dairies that can't justify buying their own equipment," he says.

He notes that the DGS 66, which is a smaller

Compost Made Their Business Grow

When Kristy Flowers' husband Jim, an organic farmer, decided to leave farming, he didn't leave compost-making behind. He and Kristy took his expertise and his recipe and turned it into a business. Kristy K Organics now makes a variety of products to promote healthy soil, including Jim's compost.

"We've been in business since 2020. COVID made it interesting," says Flowers. "We were using coir (coconut fiber), and it became hard to get. Plus, we had ordered automated packaging equipment and we couldn't get anyone to program it for us."

Products include their Premium Organic Compost (Jim's recipe), as well as shredded mulch, organic chicken pellets, aged bark fines, pure rice hulls, and rice hulls with coir.

"We started selling in local stores and via our website to customers in Minnesota and Wisconsin," says Flowers. "Our promotion is mostly through social media with support from friends and family."

While they have shipped their rice hull products nationally, shipping costs with the heavier products make wider marketing prohibitive. Most recently, Kristy K Organics started working with two distributors to sell to greenhouses.

"Mixing for greenhouses is a new ball game for us," says Flowers. "They require a lower pH."

Living in Minnesota, Flowers had the benefit of access to AURI, the state's Ag Utilization Research Institute. Before starting the business, she and Jim worked closely with AURI researchers. They needed to refine their farm compost recipe to make it better suited for lawns and gardens.

The new recipe combined composted



Products include a Premium Organic Compost, shredded mulch, organic chicken pellets, aged bark fines, pure rice hulls, and rice hulls with coir.

poultry and cow manure from local farms, as well as bark fines. While the cow and poultry manure are not from organic farms, the composting process brings them into organic compliance. The manures provide beneficial nutrients and microbes, but the aged bark adds carbon and enhanced soil structure. Both are vital to the end product. Flowers notes that they aim for a carbon ratio of 30 to 1 to help the bacteria, fungi, and microbes build humus in the soil.

"The compost is a good mix and easy to use," says Flowers. "You can really build your soils with it."

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machine, puts out roughly 3,000 lbs. of fodder per day. The machine alone is \$150,000. With a building and the HVAC and other equipment needed, the price can reach \$300,000 to \$400,000. By contrast, the California fee centers will have 10 HydroGreen DGS 808 machines per center, each machine producing up to 34,000 lbs. of forage per day.

Systems include seed storage bins with automated transport to seed cleaners and sorters to ensure maximum sprouting. Seed moves to growing beds where it's constantly watered throughout 6 days. Every aspect is automated from seed preparation to harvest.

The nutrient-rich and high-moisture fodder will be mixed with straw. The California dairies are expected to start at 20 percent fodder and move up to as much as 60 percent.

"HydroGreen is fodder, but not all fodder is HydroGreen," suggests Jarchow. "Our seed genetics and the growing system produce a different form of the traditional fodder."

Company research indicates increased feed intake, milk production, conception rate, and daily rate of gain, all with a 48 percent reduction in methane emissions.

Jarchow suggests that those who make the



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investment due to drought concerns find the feed value is worth it even in wetter years. "A Utah rancher went with HydroGreen due to lack of water, but even with snow this year, he kept feeding fodder," he says. "He saw what the advantages were with the enzymes and highly digestible fibers."

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