

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



The idea behind "Envirosod" is to grow sod on shelves inside a greenhouse. Seed takes root in biodegradable plastic mulch. Each layer is 4 ft. wide by 50 ft. long.

Fast-Growing Sod Ready To Lay In 7 To 10 Days

Utah inventor Jim Anderson hopes to hit gold with a revolutionary new way to grow sod that's ready to lay in just 7 to 10 days.

He first came up with the idea for "Envirosod" 20 years ago although he only started selling licenses for it two years ago. The idea is to grow sod on shelves inside a greenhouse. The seed takes root in a biodegradable plastic mulch called Claf, which comes from Japan.

There are multiple layers of shelving in the sod-growing units. Each layer is 4 ft. wide by 50 ft. long.

A mechanical planter sprinkles a mix of peat moss and seed on top of the Claf, then a sprinkler system lightly mists it. The building needs to be kept at optimal temperatures for the fastest production.

A license fee of \$20,000 includes the cost of having Jim on site for about 3 weeks but doesn't cover the greenhouse, shelving and other equipment. "An initial investment of between \$40,000 and \$60,000 is generally required," Anderson's wife Joyce says.

Existing greenhouses can be modified to accommodate the Envirosod system, she notes.

Anderson says the sod sells for about twice the amount of regular sod.

"If regular sod sells for 20 cents, then we wouldn't sell ours for less than 45 cents per foot because it's a much better product," says Anderson.



Multiple layers of shelving in sod-growing buildings hold long beds of fast-growing grass seed.

She also says the main selling points are that you can blend virtually any variety of grass seed and the fact that the roots take hold quickly. "It works well on hillsides and doesn't erode."

No fertilizer is added to the sod. The seed has just enough to get it through the first two weeks.

The Andersons target owners of greenhouses, nurseries and landscapers for Envirosod. "It's a very good market for them," she says.

Currently, the Andersons have six growing operations across North America and are looking for others.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jim Anderson, 7976 S 3685 W, West Jordan, Utah 84088 (ph 801 280-4777; website: www.envirolsod.com).

Restoration Pays Off For Ex-Farmer

Tractor painting and restoration is a part-time business for 54-year-old Gary Swensen of Yankton, South Dakota, since he quit farming a couple of years ago.

He's been doing custom work for people off and on for several years and works out of a small shop at his rural home. Always one to have more than one iron in the fire, Swensen has also gone back to college, and is taking a double major - History and Criminal Justice. However, as a youth, he had gone to tech school and studied body and fender repair, as well as auto mechanics.

"Over the years, that training has been very beneficial to me," he says. "Doing this kind of work again is something I really enjoy. No job is too large or too small."

Swensen recently did a job where the customer wanted his tractor sandblasted, primed and painted. Other times, tractors come in that are already cleaned up and all he has to do is paint them because the owners plan on using them and don't want the dents removed.



Tractor painting and restoration is a part-time business for Gary Swensen.

He has his own trailers that he uses whenever clients require pick up or delivery. He can accommodate units weighing up to 20,000 lbs. Swensen recently sold a unit he had restored and was hired to deliver to St. Louis, Missouri.

Prices for Swensen's painting and restoration vary depending on the job.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gary Swensen, 1408 Sunrise Drive, Yankton, S. Dak. 57078 (ph 605 665-8637 or 605 660-3489; email: g_swensen@msn.com).

Where To Buy "Do-It-Yourself" Birds

Hatcheries that sell chickens, turkeys, pheasants and other specialty birds by mail say business is booming and just keeps getting better.

Oakwood Game Farms, Princeton, Minn., sells pheasant and partridge chicks from April through July. If you prefer, you can even get fertile eggs and hatch them for yourself at 75 cents apiece.

Baby pheasants start at \$1.80 each in quantities under 100. Oakwood hatches out 50,000 chicks every Monday. Fresh, frozen and smoked birds for eating are available all year long.

If chicken is your preference, the easy part is finding a hatchery. The hard part is deciding what breed or package of breeds to order.

The McMurray hatchery started business in 1917 in Webster City, Iowa. Today you can order from dozens of different breeds, from ornamentals to meat and egg types.

Specialty "packages" include Feather Footed Fancies, Rare Breed Special, Barbecue Special, and even a FlyTyer's Special for those who need feathers for trout lures.

While most people are familiar with Leghorns and Rhode Island Reds, the rare breeds have a different sound to them. Golden Penciled Hamburgs, Silver Laced Cochins and Lakenvelders are just a few. Their prices aren't common either. The hatchery prices its Rarest of the Rare birds at \$40.00 for 25 chicks.

Hatcheries are also great places to go for information on feed and other issues.



Hatcheries that sell chickens, turkeys, pheasants and other specialty birds by mail say business is booming.

If you have internet access, a quick search for chickens and hatcheries will produce more than 5,000 listings. If you prefer print, nearly all hatcheries will send out catalogs. Here are a few of the bigger hatcheries.

- Clearview Hatchery, Box 399, Gratz, Pa. 17030

- Hoover's Hatchery, Inc., Rudd, Iowa 50471 (ph 800 247-7014; website: www.hoovershatchery.com)

- Mt. Healthy Hatcheries, Inc., 9839 Winton Rd., Mt. Healthy, Ohio 45231 (ph 800 451-5603; website: www.mthealthy.com)

- McMurray Hatchery, P.O. Box 458, 191 Closz Drive, Webster City, Iowa 50595 (ph 515 832-3280 or 800 456-3280; website: www.mcmurrayhatchery.com).



StumPro has a huge circular saw on front. After reducing stump to chips, you can lift saw blade out of the way and use machine's front blade to push dirt and chips back into hole.

StumPro Gets Rid Of Stumps Cleanly

Getting rid of stumps is a messy job. Most stump grinders are pulled by tractors or trucks, which leave ruts in the yard. And trying to do the job with a chain saw is tough, dirty work.

Rodney Lamb, Lake Isabella, Mich., says his new machine, the StumPro, obliterates stumps without destroying lawns. Lamb, who has a manufacturing background in the tree care industry, created the machine because he heard complaints from customers regarding problems with stump grinding machines on the market.

The StumPro looks like a lawn tractor with a huge circular saw attached to the front. Lamb actually built the entire machine from the ground up.

Four levers control the machine's steering and movement of the stump grinder blade.

After reducing a stump to chips, you can lift the grinder blade out of the way and use

the machine's front blade to push dirt and chips back into the hole.

The StumPro is powered by a 24 hp air-cooled gas engine. It has a hydraulic transmission and the engine and pump are connected together without belts.

The wheels are similar to those used on riding lawn mowers and golf carts.

A 1/2-in. thick windshield composed of clear Lexan plastic protects the driver from flying debris.

Right now, Lamb is looking for someone to purchase the patent and estimates that the retail price of the machine would be between \$21,000 and \$24,000.

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