

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.**

Farmers Raise Veggies For Food Bank

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

Steve and Nicky Breum have found a new market for their farm-raised vegetables. This past year their Gone Green Farms delivered more than 35,700 lbs. of potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets and onions to local and regional food banks.

"In the past, we had considered giving extras to the food bank, but we had to have a way to cover our costs," says Breum. "We set up the Alberta Farm to Food Bank website. It collects donations that go to Alberta food banks. They use the money to purchase vegetables from us at \$1 per pound."

The Breums provide the website and cover administrative costs, such as advertising. However, the money goes directly to the food banks.

"When someone donates \$1, they know that it buys a pound of food," says Breum. "In 2019, we delivered 14,414 lbs. to the Edmonton food bank and 21,380 lbs. to the Calgary Food Bank. That was up 14 percent over 2018."

Breum notes that most of the donations are small amounts from individuals. They have also received larger donations from several companies. As yet, the donations have not kept pace with deliveries.

"In 2018 we received about \$6,000 in revenue and took the rest in charity receipts against taxes," reports Breum. "This past year we had nearly \$29,000 in gross revenue. While we still can't make a living on it, it has grown 500 percent in a year."

The Breums raise about 4 acres of vegetables along with an acre of potatoes. This coming year they plan to increase the potato patch to 2 acres. In addition to food bank sales, they also sell U-pick vegetables to local customers at \$1.50 per pound.

"The biggest challenge with the root crops for the food banks is harvest," says Breum. "With all the moisture in the fall the past couple years, it's been hard to



Steve and Nicky Breum grow 5 acres of vegetables on their farm for local food banks.

get everything out of the ground. We are big enough now that we need to mechanize harvest."

While making a living is necessary, Bruem notes that the reaction they've received has been nearly as important. "We've gotten email after email from people who've used the food banks or their families have," says Breum. "The positive feedback provides such an emotional return. It hardly seems to matter if it pays or not."

Breum encourages other market gardeners to work with local food banks on similar programs. He has heard about similar programs in the United States.

"We've talked with other food banks and suggested that if they start a program like this, they should look for a little grower just starting out and help get them going," says Breum. "If our program grows enough, we hope to bring other small Alberta growers into it."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gone Green Farms, RR#2, Westeros, Alta. Canada T0C 2V0 (ph 780 312-6073; info@albertafarmtofoodbank.com; www.albertafarmtofoodbank.com).

Co-Op Marketing Boosts Small Farm Businesses

Jack McCann is helping independent small farmers sell eggs and poultry products for profit through his marketing company, TC Farm. About a dozen farmers raise produce for McCann, including Ian Rhoades and his wife Elizabeth O'Sullivan of Dundas, Minn. The two families came together in a roundabout way as both sought knowledge on how to raise chickens and market poultry products direct to customers.

TC Farm began when McCann and his wife Betsy moved to a hobby farm near Montrose, Minn. and began raising chickens for meat and eggs, and a few sheep. Within a year they were selling their surplus and eventually TC Farm grew into selling beef, pork, chicken, eggs, sausages and deli meats.

In recent years TC Farm has worked with 8 to 12 small partner farms. "This became just a natural and well-balanced partnership for all of us," says McCann. Eventually they developed business relationships with several more small organic farms around the state.

Rhodes and O'Sullivan, who've been able to contract more than 1,000 organic eggs to TC Farms every month, own one of those farms. If they produce more than TC can use, those are marketed through a wholesale buyer.

The two families met each other through their successful efforts to comply with state animal welfare requirements, learning from each other. McCann works with farmers to help them choose the right breeds to produce a larger and healthier bird with better flavor. He says the female Cornish hens will grow slower on regimented feed and grass for a longer period of time without getting so large they literally tip over and die. "We want them to reach that 10-week mark where chickens get most of their flavor."

The McCanns initially marketed their eggs and meat cuts to family, friends, and co-workers. This CSA-style marketing didn't last long because customers were difficult to retain. Now TC Farm allows customers to choose the amount and type of meat cuts they want and whether they'd like it every month. "This led to a fast-growing customer base, around 750 to 1,000 individual monthly deliveries in the Twin Cities area, amounting to about \$100,000 in product," McCann



Ian Rhoades and wife Elizabeth O'Sullivan contract more than 1,000 organic eggs to TC Farms every month. Photo above shows their outdoor flock.



says. "The most effective marketing I've had is through happy customers and word of mouth."

McCann says their biggest challenge is logistics, which includes receiving products, sorting and packaging them, labeling and then delivering boxes to about 70 pick-up locations in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro area. TC Farm members log onto the website to identify when and where to pick up their products.

McCann recently sold the Montrose hobby farm where the business started and now focuses on sales, marketing and management. "It's been an amazing business where we've met great people and established wonderful relationships because of the products we're offering. We've found our niche and continue to grow."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, TC Farm, 10389 Baker Ave. S.W., Montrose, Minn. 55363 (ph 612 217-1770; www.tcfarm.com).

They Repurpose Livestock Buildings

When David Foster needed a shed to store equipment, he got it on the cheap by tearing down an old poultry pole barn. The deal was so good that he started Cash Cow Enterprises to tear down old livestock buildings and sell the components. His shed parts have been used for everything from hay and equipment storage to livestock shelters and, in one case, a house.

"The 40-ft. span gives the option of a completely open floor plan," explains Foster. "We can offer customers a 40 by 100-ft. building, complete with trusses, wood purlins and sheet metal for the roof, for \$6,000. It would be hard to buy just the new sheet metal for our total price."

Foster has been sharing his personal experience and duplicating it for farm customers for the past 10 years. A recent tear down project included 4,080 linear ft.

of buildings with 32-ft. spans from 20 barns.

"We've moved miles and miles of buildings," says Foster. "We did 1.7 miles of buildings in our best year and more than a mile of buildings this past year. Currently, we have about 800 linear ft. of building left with another 300 linear ft. taken down, waiting to be picked up and sold."

In addition to the buildings themselves, Cash Cow employees salvage other materials as well. Items for sale include direct drive fans, foam board insulation, industrial ceiling fans, extra lumber, propane heaters, steel bar panels and gates, hog feeders and waterers, and hopper bottom grain bins.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cash Cow Enterprises, 1035 KS-39, Fort Scott, Kan. 66701 (ph 620 224-9433; www.facebook.com/CashCowEnterprise/).



David Foster tears down old livestock buildings and sells the components. Photo shows a house under construction.



Two 40 by 100-ft. buildings were torn down and loaded onto this semi trailer, ready to be re-erected.