

GRASSROOTS

Inventions put Farmer Idea Exchange winners on the map

The American Farm Bureau Federation's Farmer Idea Exchange has likely yielded as many useful inventions as Thomas Edison over the years. Some of the winners' ideas have gone on to be important tools in agriculture and other industries or have been marketed on a national scale.

Jim Porterfield, director of research for the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture said the objective hasn't changed with the successes of new innovations.

"The Farmer Idea Exchange is still a way to share good ideas that could help other farmers in other parts of the country," Porterfield said.

Porterfield acknowledged that the exchange is a great venue for encouraging products to be put on the market as well.

"In many cases, this is a kick-start to market ideas. Numerous participants have said the Farmer Idea Exchange was a big step for them," he said.

LeRoy Stotts, from Seiling, Okla., was a recent winner of the Farmer Idea Exchange and was awarded a year's use of a New Holland tractor. His invention was an add-on to livestock trailers to make them ground-loading, called



LeRoy Stotts of Seiling, Okla., and his family recently took delivery of a New Holland tractor, which Stotts can use for free over the next year. Stotts was awarded use of the tractor when he won the American Farm Bureau Federation Farmer Idea Exchange competition in January.

the LT Dock/Groundload Conversion. The award has brought interest to Stotts' invention, and has brought some business his way.

"The whole deal [with the Farmer

Idea Exchange], including winning the tractor, has been very beneficial," Stotts said.

The idea came about when Stotts wanted the access of a groundload trailer but didn't want to spend the money to buy one. He constructed a ramp that could be attached to "pot" or "straight floor" trailers for easier loading and unloading. After the exchange, and having people stop him on the road to ask about the invention, Stotts has produced nearly 50 for buyers nationwide.

James Brandau of Manhattan, Ill., was another of this year's winners. His King Korn Kooker Jr. is bringing him a little extra cash since the Farmer Idea Exchange. He sells corn cooked in his 200 or 400 ear-per-hour cooker at a number of events.

"I thought it would add a little extra income to the farm," Brandau said of his initial reason for producing the cooker.

He's been cooking corn for NASCAR events for about five years, but he's recently found that corporate events have a more consistent draw.

Brandau also said he's marketing the stainless steel cooker for people who want to sell corn at events for themselves.

One of the biggest Farmer Idea Exchange success stories starts with an invention by Gary Sage, whose operations are based in Amarillo, Texas. Sage won the contest in 1994 and was so successful with his Sage Oil Vac that he quit farming to pursue the invention full time.

"We began building a few in the winter—20 were built in the first year. Then we had such demand that we couldn't keep up with production and farming at the same time, so we decided to make it full time," Sage said.

The oil vac, a machine designed to quickly drain and refill oil reservoirs in constantly running engines, has since been marketed outside of agriculture.

"Then we began selling to other industries," Sage said. "We've sold to oil and gas companies and we're now selling to the Department of Defense."

Sage, who served on his county board for a number of years, said the Farmer Idea Exchange provided him a unique opportunity.

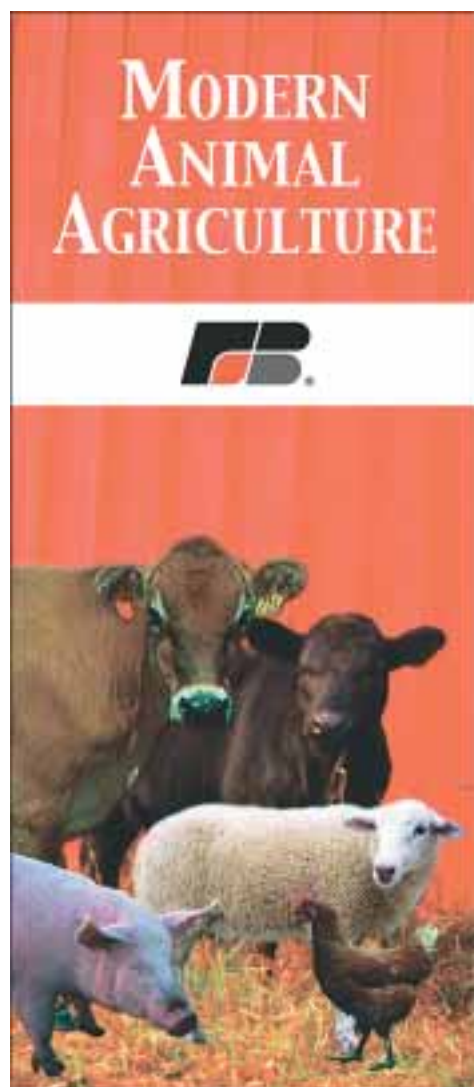
"The Farmer Idea Exchange bolstered my confidence," he said.

That little-known machine that made its debut a little over 10 years ago yielded sales of \$2.3 million in 2004. That's proof that a good idea with the right motivation can go a long way.

For more information about the Farmer Idea Exchange, visit the Web site at www.fb.org/programs/farmerx/.

New animal ag brochure available

The American Farm Bureau Federation has produced a new educational brochure, *Modern Animal Agriculture*, for use by state and county Farm Bureaus.



The colorful trifold brochure includes information on how livestock production benefits rural communities. It also describes how farmers and ranchers work to keep the livestock in their care healthy.

The brochure cites a key ag statistic that is frequently overlooked by journalists: "Almost 99 percent of all U.S. farms are still owned by individuals, family partnerships or family corporations. They are responsible for 94 percent of all ag production."

The new brochure replaces *Farmers Care For America's Farm Animals*, which AFBF published a few years ago. The new brochure is one of several planned updates to AFBF's portfolio of printed materials designed for use primarily by county and state Farm Bureaus, according to Don Lipton, AFBF director of public relations.

"Outreach to the public about the role of agriculture in their communities remains a continuing challenge for Farm Bureau members. Our goal is to make the process easier by providing updated educational material covering a range of current agricultural topics," Lipton said.

New brochures covering food safety, conservation and farm programs are also planned.

Modern Animal Agriculture is available in bundles of 100 for \$30. All of AFBF's educational brochures and materials can be ordered online at the Voice of Agriculture Web site, http://www.fb.org/brochures/order_form.html.

FB NEWSMAKERS

Lisa Miller joined the **North Dakota** Farm Bureau staff June 6 as an **administrative communications assistant**. Working with NDFB communications, she will maintain relationships between NDFB and the public. Miller is a recent communications studies graduate at Minnesota State University-Moorhead. She is a native of Bismarck, N.D.

New York Farm Bureau recently welcomed **Dean Casey** as a **regional field advisor**. He was previously a district representative for the NYFB Young Farmer and Rancher Committee. Casey has been a county president and board of directors member. Casey is a graduate of the State University of New York-Cobleskill with a bachelor of technology degree in agricultural business. Casey is a resident of Rensselaer County, N.Y.

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