

TURNING PERSONAL SKILLS INTO INCOME

Most farmers and their families have a diverse set of valuable skills that they use every day to keep their farms running.

As a farmer, you may find you often have to do one of the following, often with no warning and in response to a farm emergency:

- Repair a broken grapple or auger on a backhoe loader.
- Install new water filters and water routing equipment in a barn.
- Replace head gaskets on a tractor or weld a sieve arm on a broken combine.
- Diagnose disease in animals and administer vaccines or antibiotics.
- Carry out breeding and artificial insemination in large or small animals.
- Manage an ethnically diverse farm staff through challenging environmental or time-constrained conditions.

Farm families who have acquired technical, trade and management skills while working or pursuing some hobbies on the farm may be able to convert these skills and hobbies (and in some cases, their farm equipment) into income-producing opportunities. This work could be done on the farm or at other local businesses, and in some cases over the internet.

Examples of potential income-generating ideas that a farmer could pursue on the family farm or neighboring farm might include but are not limited to:

- Farm equipment repair
- Irrigation installation
- Excavation of yards or contract cultivation and pesticide application
- Barn construction
- Dry-wall or insulation installation

Skills that might transfer to internet businesses or part-time off-site work include:

- Requisitioning (ordering supplies)



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- Farm staff training and supervision
- Farm products sales and services

Hobbies that are readily converted to small businesses might include:

- Precision woodworking
- Large engine repair and tune-up
- Gun repair
- Charter fishing

Farmers possess an enormous range of skills valued by other people and companies. Multiple examples of opportunities could grow out of their skills, hobbies and interests.

GETTING STARTED

According to the Michigan State University Extension *Furthering Families* “Turning Personal Skills Into Income” fact sheet, to determine which skills, hobbies or personal strengths you possess that can be used to earn additional money, use the process below:

1. Brainstorm all the skills and strengths you have. Focus first on the things you really enjoy doing and are good at. Ask yourself such questions as:

- What do I like to do?
- What do I have fun doing?

To learn more, visit msue.msu.edu/managingfarmstress.

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- What skills have I developed?
- What do I (and others) think I'm good at?

Having trouble starting a list? Ask friends or family members to help generate ideas. Sometimes they may be able to help identify our talents or strengths when we aren't able.

2. Decide if this skill or hobby can be a source of income.

If you offered this skill to others, would it be helpful? What product or service could you turn your hobby into that might be used by others?

Often asking yourself questions such as "Is my idea practical?" or "What profit can I expect in the first year?" will help you determine how feasible your business idea is.

Resources may be available in your community to support your new business plan. Contact your local Small Business Association, Chamber of Commerce and your local Cooperative Extension for potential resources.

Starting your own business is not the only option. Your skills can be of high value to various companies. Create a good resumé based on your experience and look for job positions requirements that match your set of experience and skills.

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

3. Construct a plan for how you can turn this skill into a business.

What steps do you have to follow to make this happen? This may require developing a business plan and determining the legal and financial steps you need to follow. Resources exist in the community to help you do this.

EVALUATE THE PLAN

4. Evaluate and revisit your plan regularly to make sure you are accomplishing what you set out to do.



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