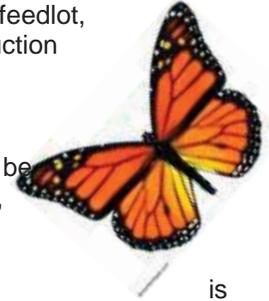


## Building a SEED Park: Part IX – Butterfly Ranch (Specialty products)

The first in this series of articles compared building a SEED Park, a Sustainable Environmental and Economic Development Park, to building a shopping mall. The mall has a series of major retailers, or anchor stores. A SEED Park must have a series of primary businesses, or anchor businesses, around which secondary businesses are structured. The easiest example might be a feedlot, dairy, or ethanol plant as the primary business around which greenhouses, fish production facilities, or even a butterfly ranch are placed.

These secondary businesses can each have a revenue stream adequate to provide products for small niche markets. An example of one such secondary business could be goats for milk, cheese, soap and lotion. The market for these products is very narrow, but such operations do exist and support multi-generational families.



A rabbit production facility could be another secondary business. Again, the market is narrow, but specialty items include rabbits for the pet trade, rabbits for the food market, rabbit skins and even rabbit manure. As warm-blooded animals, rabbits generate a fair amount of heat. This heat has been used to heat closely coupled greenhouses. Rabbit manure has been processed by earthworms to produce vermicompost, a desirable and expensive form of fertilizer sought after by horticulturists for their ornamental plants.

Many people start off as hobbyists raising angelfish, reptiles, water lilies, or other desirable products, and soon find that people wish to buy from them. The hobbyist becomes a commercial, but small order, producer. They often do not have the space or other resources to support their hobby. A SEED Park can provide an excellent setting for such businesses.

If you pick up many magazines directed to children, you'll find an advertisement in the back for sea monkeys. Parents and grandparents will spend \$10 to \$15 for a small vial of artemia, or brine shrimp, eggs. Children place these eggs in salt water to watch them hatch and the brine shrimp are commonly called sea monkeys in this trade. Brine shrimp are sold by the millions and hatched to produce feed for larval fish. Brine shrimp for the children's market is very much a specialty product with a narrow consumer potential. How many other strange, and perhaps exotic, animals do you see in pet shops? What's the source of all the tarantulas, hissing cockroaches, turtles, snakes, frogs, salamanders and hermit crabs? Most likely someone somewhere started producing them as a hobby and then grew to a commercial scale.

Unusual animals for which there are steady markets include ladybugs, crickets, mealworms, earthworms, and mice. All of these could be produced more reliably and economically in a SEED Park than as a stand-alone business outside of the SEED Park.

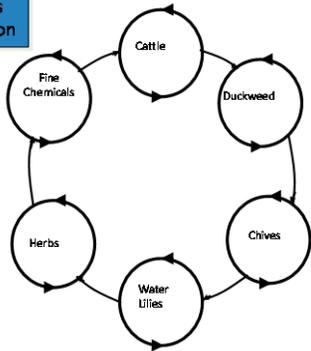
There are several butterfly ranches, or farms, scattered across the US. Butterfly collectors will pay handsomely for some rare specimens pinned and framed. Others will pay to stroll through a greenhouse, or net-covered structure, to see butterflies feeding, flying or emerging from a chrysalis. Cultured butterflies are sometimes placed in a box to be released as a new bride strolls down the aisle following her wedding. Dad usually doesn't even want to know what he paid for those butterflies.

The "All-a-Flutter Butterfly Farm" in High Point, NC has been in operation for 6 years and has become so popular that they are turning down requests from school groups to visit. They sell 16 live butterflies for release at weddings and funerals for \$120, plus shipping. Fifty butterflies in one container are priced at \$350. Visitors to the farm pay \$5 per adult and \$4 per child to enter the 20- x 48-ft screened flight house. They also host special events such as birthday parties, summer workshops, training programs, non-profit fund-raisers and are the subject for many news articles.

A SEED Park provides the opportunity to create new jobs and income in rural area. The major export from most small, rural towns today is their youth. They move to find jobs. A recent article in US News and World Report (12 Nov 2007) quoted John Molinaro of the Aspen Institute as saying "the Toyota lottery

doesn't work". Small, rural America cannot look to outside sources to come to their town and save them by providing jobs in a big factory. The answer is right here. If rural America is to be saved, it will save itself. One way to do so is through a SEED Park.

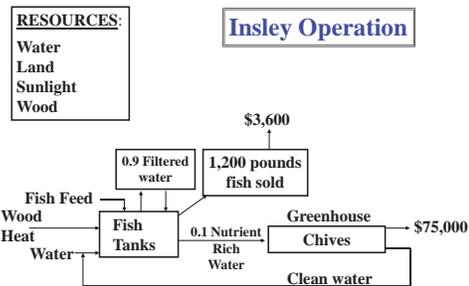
**Process Integration**



The discharge from one agricultural-industrial operation can be the input to the next downstream operation.

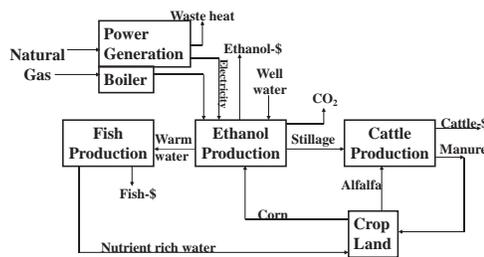
Examples of integrated recycling agro-industrial businesses existing today include a fish farm and chive production facility in Oklahoma, the Inslee Operation, and an ethanol plant, cattle feedlot, fish production facility, and agricultural crops in Garden City, KS, Reeve AgriEnergy. Both of these facilities have been in operation for well over 10 years. A new and much larger integrated system in Mead, NE produces ethanol, feeds the distillers' grain to cattle, produces methane for power, and applies nutrient-rich water to cropland to produce corn. The corn becomes the stock from which ethanol is produced. These are some of the components of a SEED Park. Recycling and reusing resources is the first step toward sustainability.

The first step in building a SEED Park is to identify the local resources available. Resources include land, water, sun, wind, heat, cold, people, finances, training, transportation, engineering, equipment, and multiple other items. The second step is to closely examine what we are doing now and ask ourselves, is it sustainable? If not, how do we move toward sustainability? What does our community, the state, the nation, and the world need that we can provide? This evaluation defines the market. Once we have an assessment of resources and have defined markets, the third step is to identify the processes of converting local resources into marketable products.



A proposed 10,000-A SEED Park, support growth over 30-50 years, can be Luis Valley. The Stakeholders will identify businesses to be located within the park by priority as primary, anchor, businesses secondary, supporting, businesses. The businesses should be those capable of established today – all technology, design, requirements are readily available. Other potential businesses might be based on technology or markets that are in the developing stage and these businesses would be built in 5, 10, 20, or 30 years as markets and technology mature. The secondary tier of businesses could be natural-resource based and site-specific businesses such as education, tourism, and even research and development.

**Reeve AgriEnergy**



adequate to be built in the San potential and rank them or as top ranked being and operational

A successful SEED Park in the San Luis Valley is doable and could be a model for rural development in the US. This Stakeholders' Meeting is the focus point for the self-examination and provides a collective, community-wide vision for the future. Data collected during the Stakeholders' Meeting will be used to develop business plans for the community-identified, and ranked, economic ventures.