

Farm Management

Put online resources to work for your farm



FUNCTIONAL: The three-point hitch is spring-loaded, and the lights work.



REPLICA: The dashboard and controls emulate the real tractor.



DETAILS: The engine block is poplar; all other components are aluminum.



UNIQUE: An access door on the John Deere 8020 reveals the radiator.



HIDDEN: The light switch and control for the engine sound track are hidden.



POWER: The servo and electronics are connected to two battery-powered motors mounted in the front.

Country Counsel

By ROBERT MOORE

THE Internet is a great information resource for farmers. Everything from weather reports to grain prices to equipment parts can be found with just a few clicks of the mouse button. However, many producers do not realize what information is available through state and local government sources on the Internet.

Auditors' sites

Nearly every county auditor maintains a website that provides information on every parcel of land in the county. Typically, a name search can be used to find every parcel of land a person owns in the county. Searches also can be performed by parcel number or address.

The auditor's information typically includes the owner's name, acreage, real estate taxes and value. This source of information is useful to landowners who might want to take inventory of their land ownership, including taxes owed, current agricultural use values and auditor valuations.

Auditor searches also can be used to find information on properties owned by other people. For example, say a farmer has always been interested in a certain 80-acre farm but does not know who owns the farm or how to contact the owner. The farmer can search the auditor's site and find the owner and contact information.

Some auditor websites have an additional feature that incorporates geographic information systems into its information database. GIS allows the user to see an overhead view of the property boundary of a parcel and those parcels around it. Overhead photos are often also incorporated to provide an even better view of the parcel. This system allows a landowner to identify his or her property boundary and those of the surrounding parcels. This feature is useful when searching for information on a certain parcel.

Using the above example, the farmer could use the GIS feature on his county auditor's website to locate the 80-acre farm. By clicking his mouse on that farm, he instantly finds out ownership, contact information and other pertinent information. GIS allows for searches without owner names, parcel numbers or addresses.

To find a county auditor website, simply type the county name and auditor into any search engine.

Recorders' sites

Another good source of real estate information is the county recorder's website. The availability of online information

Key Points

- Many functions of local government are available online.
- You can find the owners, acreage, taxes and value of a parcel of land.
- Go online to check liens against equipment you are considering buying.

varies greatly from one county to another. Some counties have no online information, while other counties have deeds, easements and liens available for viewing. Perhaps the most valuable use of this source of information is to determine what liens or mortgages a person may have on his or her property.

For example, a farmer is deciding whether to become involved in a farming partnership with Joe. The farmer has some concerns about Joe's financial status and does not want to go into business with someone who has creditor problems. The farmer can go to the county recorder website and search for Joe's name.

The search results show that Joe has tax liens, judgment liens and mechanics liens on his properties. The farmer quickly realizes Joe has serious financial problems and decides to not pursue a business relationship with him.

Secretary of state's site

The secretary of state website also offers useful information. Every incorporated business entity in Ohio must provide the SOS with at least a contact name or statutory agent and address so the entity can be contacted.

Using the earlier example, the farmer finds the 80 acres is owned by Big Farm LLC, but he does not know who the owners are. The farmer can search the SOS website for Big Farm LLC and find a name and address for the company.

Another important feature of the SOS site is uniform commercial code filings. A search can reveal what UCC liens a person or business has filed on their property. The UCC filing will identify the property subject to the lien and who holds the lien. This information can be useful.

For example, a farmer is considering buying a tractor from his neighbor. The farmer searches the SOS website and finds the tractor is subject to a lien and requires the neighbor to have the lien released before he buys the tractor.

Producers should take some time this winter to explore what local sources of information are available to them on the Internet. These free sources of information can be valuable to farmers in making management decisions for their operations.

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