

Better tobacco curing, Italian-style

By RICHARD DAVIS

WHEN fuel prices go up, people get creative. That is what happened to the Boyettes at Rock Ridge Farms in Rock Ridge, N.C., when they began to look into more fuel-efficient flue-cured tobacco-curing barns.

This summer they installed a

Key Points

- Soaring fuel costs encourage farmers to try a European tobacco barn.
- Savings in first year averaged around 14%, compared to traditional barns.
- The barn may be eligible for assistance from USDA's Rural Development division.

Europetob ETS 15B barn, and they believe the environmental features of the structure will save them money.

"It was very easy to install and has performed very well for us," Robert Boyette says. "The barn was assembled here on site by two men in two and a half days."

The sidewalls of the structure are

built from rust-fighting galvanized steel.

"This barn holds 15 32-inch DeCloet-style boxes," Boyette says. "Compare that to the largest DeCloet barn we have, which holds 13 boxes."

"The barn is constructed very tightly," he adds. "It is insulated with 2 inches of foam in the walls, 2 inches in the ceiling. The heat exchanger and the burner combination are more efficient than anything we have been using."

"It is easy to cure in," Boyette adds. "It has a check door that lets the farmer look at the tobacco and see how it is progressing through the cure. It takes the guesswork out of the curing process since he can make adjustments if he needs to."

The Europetob barn is set up with an automatic curing system. A gas meter helped the Boyettes keep tabs on LP savings this year.

Keeping closer tabs

The Boyettes monitored gas usage over four cures during this season, and with this barn they calculated they were curing an average of between 14 and 15 pounds of dry tobacco per gallon of LP gas. "For comparison, we've also been monitoring a Powell barn, and we've been running from a low of 11 pounds of tobacco to 12 to 13 pounds of dry tobacco per gallon," Boyette says.

They tracked the efficiency on all their cures this season. After the first two cures, they invited Wilson County Extension agent Norman Harrell to their farm to take data. For those last two cures, Harrell kept statistics on the Europetob barn as well as on two Powell barns.

He documented the amount of gas that was used per cure and verified that they were indeed very close on their savings calculations.

"The Boyettes also kept up with the amount of tobacco that went into the barn green and how much it weighed when it came out cured," Harrell notes. "Over those last two cures, the Europetob barn averaged 13.8 pounds of tobacco cured per gallon of fuel burned. The other two barns averaged 11.9 pounds of cured tobacco per gallon of LP gas."

"On average, the Europetob barn was 14% more efficient," he concludes.

Wilson City officials also measured energy usage. The barn has a 7½-hp propeller-style fan pulling about 21 to 22 amps under normal operating conditions.

"It is pretty efficient," Boyette says. "We're pulling about 6 amps less with this particular barn than we are with our squirrel-cage-type fans in our DeCloet and Powell barns."

The total cost of the barn is around \$31,000, Boyette notes. The Boyettes have looked into grant assistance from USDA's Rural Development and believe, since this barn is so energy-efficient, it may be eligible for assistance funding under the Rural Energy For America Program.

"I understand the grant money could amount to up to 25% of the total cost of this barn if this barn is used as a replacement," Boyette says.

Swisher Sweets Congratulates Brian Kirksey, 2008 Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of The Year.



As the proud sponsor of the Southeastern Farmer of the Year Award, we congratulate this year's winner, Brian Kirksey from Amity, Arkansas.

Sunbelt AG Expo, Moultrie, GA



SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:
Cigar Smoking Can Cause Lung
Cancer And Heart Disease.



(ABOVE) NOT YOUR TYPICAL BARN: Robert Boyette says the new Europetob barn directly behind him includes a number of construction features that make it more fuel efficient than typical flue-cured barns.



(ABOVE RIGHT) ROOMY INSIDE: The Europetob barn can hold up to 15 32-inch boxes. The barn was designed by Italian Eric Scaion in Isola Rizza, Italy.



COZY COAT: Two inches of insulation keep warmth inside the barn.



KEEPING TABS: A user door allows the grower to take a look into the barn as the cure progresses.

We Continue to GROW



February 4-6

NC STATE FAIRGROUNDS • RALEIGH, NC

The largest agricultural exhibition in the Carolinas and Virginia. The 2009 Southern Farm Show continues to grow with even more to see. Additional outdoor exhibits means more ideas, experts and equipment.

Over 500 Manufacturers with Expert Advice

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|
| Livestock Equipment | Tractors | Loaders | Backhoes | Forestry | Implements |
| Landscape Equipment | Seed | Trailers | Irrigation | Fencing | ...and |
| Hay Equipment | Mowers | Chemicals | Trenchers | Sprayers | More |

SOUTHERN NATIONAL DRAFT HORSE COON MULE JUMP

Friday, February 6th
Hunt Horse Arena

FRIDAY
Tobacco Growers Association of NC Annual Meeting

Hours: 9am-4pm Wednesday-Friday
FREE ADMISSION & PARKING!

Call 800-849-0248 for More Information

See the January Carolina-Virginia Farmer for full details or visit us online.

www.SouthernFarmShow.com

A Southern Shows, Inc. Production