

Given the unreliability of traditional investing products in recent months, such as 'blue-chip' company stock for example, many are seeking high ground with investment vehicles widely perceived as safer alternatives. When even money market accounts are providing increasingly diminishing returns, investors around the world are finding themselves becoming increasingly resourceful.

Hedge funds (private pools of capital providing a major source of liquidity) offer investment capital to new and old businesses and should not be blamed for the recent failures across the regulated banking system. Meanwhile, in response to the credit crisis, many institutional investors are finding many mutual funds are merging. With these mergers, the funds form single, more diversified portfolios to make money and to better serve investors. Additionally, Funds are also opening to the public and new, more reliable investors.

Among other safe, alternative investment, apparently, is farmland real estate. Farmland investing is attracting investors, whom are steadily increasing demand for land supply, thanks to a culmination of factors. This increase in demand has mostly been seen over the course of the first half of 2008 and is remaining relatively steady.

But why are these investors so attracted to the agricultural acreage? It has a lot to do with the fact, while worldwide equity and credit markets have wiped out trillions of dollars in investment, farmland remains a solid, concrete money vehicle to ensure stability and positive returns. This form of property, as oppose to say naked short selling, is physically in existence and does not perpetuate any form of fabricated supply nor demand. This is in stark contrast, however, to what has been seen in the housing market over recent years with a rapidly inflated supply over demand. Moreover, with demand for farmland showing no signs of quelling, the trend does not appear it will soon change.

Further perpetuating the booming farm real estate market are the increasingly stronger crop prices. As crop prices go up, so do the prices for the land needed to grow them. This can be accredited in-part to the strong demand for corn and soybeans. These crops have multiplied in demand exponentially over recent years considering they are now not only harvested as a food product for consumers, but also for alternative energy as key ingredients in ethanol and biodiesel products for big business.

In response to the fast-growing interest in alternative investments such these, NY-based Opal Financial Group (Opal) is hosting its "Alternative Investing Summit" (AIS) on December 7-9, 2008 at the Ritz Carton in Laguna Niguel, CA to fundamentally provide insight on these different types of investing. This is meant to allow investors to further explore investment products, such as the aforementioned, the best decisions available in today's tumultuous markets through the performance measurement of certain hedge funds, both traditional and synthetic, and popular real estate investing strategies with the greatest risk vs. reward over the next 5 years.



With the examination of the seemingly unpredictable real estate market, AIS will cover what new areas are developing, such as farmland real estate, how much real estate illiquidity can certain portfolios withstand based on individual portfolio-balance and what significant opportunities/challenges lay ahead for the real estate sector in itself. With this, AIS is designed to open investors' eyes to different types of property, private equity, opportunistic real estate investing and how to wisely invest in a decelerating market both domestically and internationally.

Regarding hedge fund education available to the attendees of AIS, speakers will also touch-on what is in store for the future, realistic return expectations given the current market environment and weather or not current returns are sustainable for the future. Also covered will be how fund of funds managers identify and access managers capable of outperforming across market cycles and innovative styles/strategies certain hedge funds employ to stay ahead of the curve.

Abe Wellington, CEO of [Opal Financial Group](#), indicated "AIS is meant to educate attendees of the many effects of the marketplace today, such as the implications of the convergence between private equity and hedge funds, for example. We are also focused on defining opportunities and trends in such sectors as private equity, distressed investing and the increasing popularity of alternatives."

Investors internationally and domestically, have found their promising options dwindling at an alarming rate. However, one thing is for sure; there are alternatives to traditional investments available to those who look hard enough. If not a hedge fund, there is always real estate. If not real estate, there is always the traditional IRA. With resurgence in alternative investing, this is clearly a period of time investors are working harder to make their money work for them.