

Computer network can help USDA export drive

LINCOLN, Neb., — A joint pilot computer project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Nebraska could lend extra punch to U.S. export expansion efforts, particularly for value-added products, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said last week.

Block said the pilot project — in which foreign agricultural trade leads are sent to U.S. suppliers on a University of Nebraska com-

puter network — was put into operation last week by the university-sponsored system, called AGNET in cooperation with USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, which provides the trade leads.

AGNET is an information delivery network designed to be used by people with no previous knowledge of computers. This system can assist users in three general areas: helping to solve

agricultural and home management questions; providing timely information to keep users up-to-date on market conditions, trends, predictions and USDA national news releases; and assisting communications by providing an electronic mail and conferencing service.

Block's visit to the university was one of several stops and speaking engagements he had scheduled around Nebraska.

"Time can be crucial in the highly-competitive agricultural export business," Block said. "This new system could permit same-day response by American companies to requests for agricultural products made by foreign importers to U.S. agricultural attaches and counselors throughout the world."

"The link with AGNET adds a new dimension to the highly successful FAS Trade Opportunity Referral Service, or TORS," Block said. "For 10 years foreign trade leads have been cabled to TORS by our attaches and sent to the appropriate suppliers by computerized mail. Mailing takes time — up to six days for some California exporters — but even with the delay, it has proven effective. We were able to credit more than \$150 million worth of new export business last year directly to TORS contacts."

"The new system, in which FAS computers can put trade leads into AGNET immediately after they are received, should provide the opportunity for a substantial increase in this business."

Block said the TORS mailing list of trade leads would be continued to companies that want them, along with the weekly listing of trade leads in USDA's "Export Briefs" report.

He credited state departments of agriculture with helping to build the TORS list of U.S. agricultural suppliers from a few hundred at

the start to more than 7,000 today. He said foreign requests for U.S. products through the system average more than 55 per week.

"Most requests are for value-added products," Block said. "These are processed food items — canned fruits, vegetables, meats, literally hundreds of food items that create jobs as they are transformed from raw materials off the farm into consumer-ready products."

Block said U.S. exports of these products totaled between \$12 billion and \$13 billion last year and USDA is making a concerted effort to expand this segment of U.S. agricultural trade.

"Bulk commodities — grains, soybeans and cotton — will continue to be our export mainstay," he said, "but the United States has the most advanced food technology in the world, and we should take advantage of that in the world market."

He said the trade lead project is another step in the USDA drive to improve its global information gathering, analysis and transmission system in support of export expansion. Block said work is underway, using State Department satellite telecommunications, to link all overseas agricultural attaché posts with Washington by computer.

The pilot trade lead project with AGNET will run for 90 days, after which a decision will be made on whether to make it permanent, Block said.

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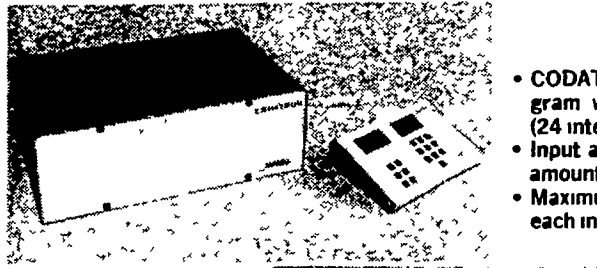
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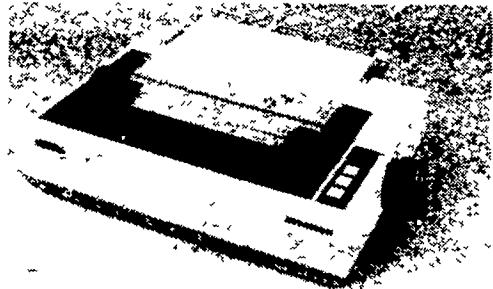


Automatic Feeder

The feeders are of stainless steel, durable and easily cleaned. The feeder comprises a housing with feed inlet, feeding trough and transmitter/receiver unit. The transmitter/receiver unit is mounted at the front of the trough.

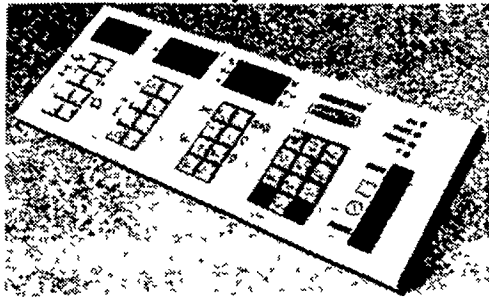
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Printer

A printer can be supplied on request for the models F 26 and L which prints out the data stored in the central computer either automatically or on request. The printer is a useful extension to the cow calendar and is practically indispensable for herd management. Uses standard 8 1/2"x11" computerized paper — not an adding machine type paper.



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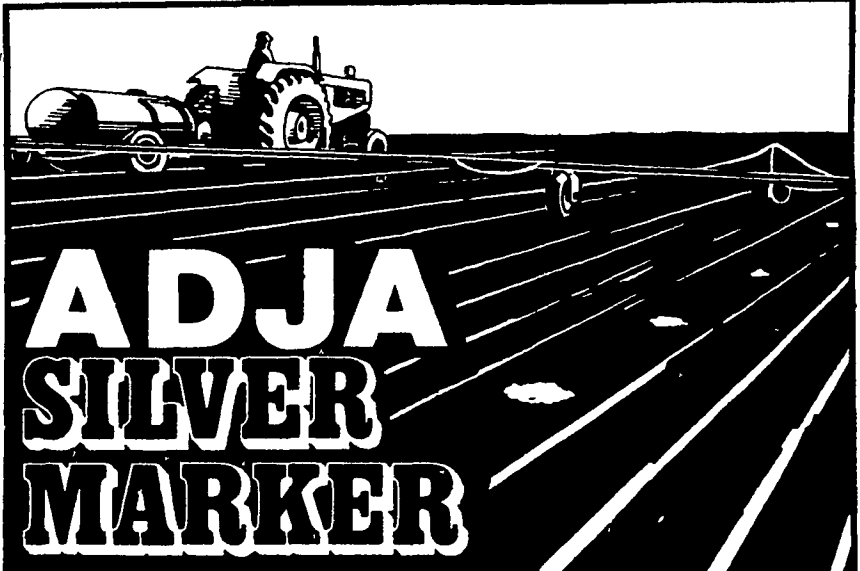
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