

Master Farmer Visits Russia To Compare Notes

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the privatization of farms was forming," Moyer said. "They are trying to get the land back in the hands of the private farmers. This is their goal, but it is still a Communist country, and they don't sell the land; they only loan it with no guarantee of future ownership. It is only a promise of the government and the local farmers are not stupid. When the leaders are not present, they confide that the promises of the government are suspect.

"They were promised private land for decades. Then something would get started, and the government would take it from them again. That's why they hesitate to go ahead with farming now."

The group made a 2500 mile trip in Russia from Moscow to Kursh,

to Voronezh, to Volgograd and back to Moscow. While the area covered looks very small on the total map of the former Soviet Union, the visit was to the heart of the fertile black soil region along the Seim river. While the individuals on the tour had requested to see private farms, the officials mostly had excuses as to why these farms could not be seen.

"They wanted to show us only the best farms so they took us out to the hills to see the vast farming area of rich soils," Moyer said "But the soil was hard as rock. They had no measurable rain since June."

The one real dairy farm they did see was visited when a taxi was hired privately. Half of the dairy stalls were empty. Cows were being slaughtered because the farmers could not afford to keep them.

Large fields are plowed without regard to conservation, and the group tried to teach the Russian farmers by showing photographs of how it is done here.

The markets in town were primitive. Produce was displayed on the ground. A side of beef would be hanging in the market, and a man with a cleaver would chop out the cut you wanted.

The group met a family that would like to have an exchange visit with a small family in America. In addition, before the trip, a Russian family that has immigrated to the local area provided Moyer with a few words of greeting to help him communicate on the trip.

Through these contacts, Moyer hopes to continue his communication with the Russian people.

"I saw what Communism did to what had been the second most powerful country in the world," Moyer said. "No birds sing. They only have a few English sparrows. The tools are primitive. Brooms are made from white birch twigs and shovels hand made from tin. Seventy percent of the grain is lost from field to bakery because of old

equipment and poor management. "The people are clean, and they still believe in God even after years of forbidden religious expression," Moyer said. "They are not only hungry for food, they are hungry for information too."

"We take so much for granted. I thought, how could it be so?"



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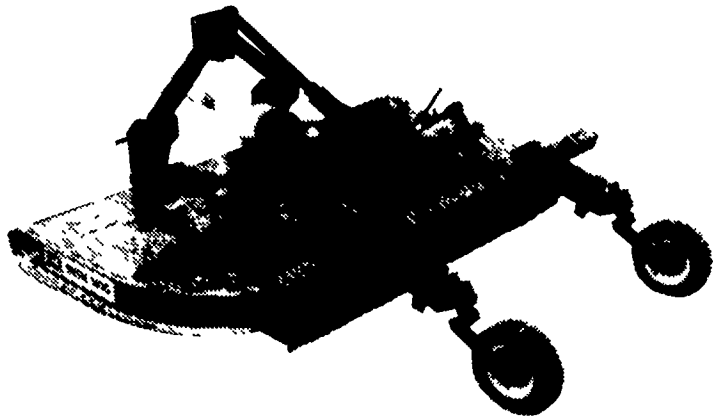
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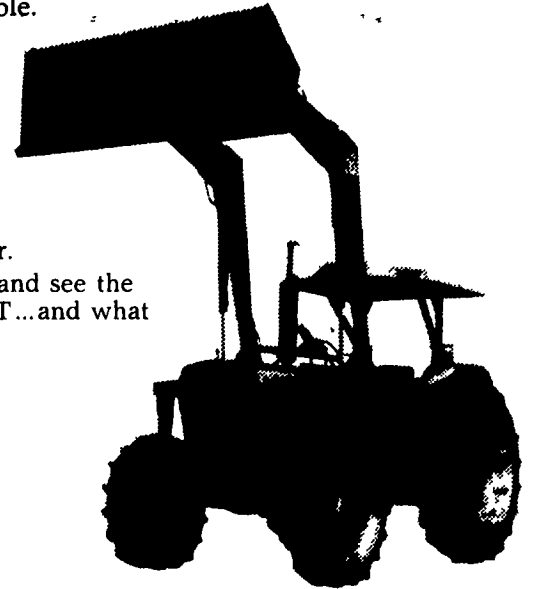
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