

Commitment To NCGA

SHELTON, Neb. — Missed basketball games. From time to time, that thought comes to mind when Rod Gangwish contemplates the year ahead. As newly elected president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), Gangwish expects that he'll be investing lots of time in meeting the responsibilities of NCGA's presidency this year.

Leadership comes with a price. But for Gangwish, the opportunity to lead NCGA is a commitment that, at least for a while, will have to be first. Gangwish, who with the help of two full-time employees farms 1,400 furrow-irrigated acres of corn, soybeans and alfalfa near Shelton, Neb.

Gangwish has two teenage sons and a daughter who help out on the farm. Gangwish's wife Jane works as a physical therapist.

As the volunteer, elected leader of nearly 30,000 corn growers, Gangwish has a big responsibility. Congress is reaching increasingly crucial points in its consideration of the 1995 farm bill. And corn growers are positioning themselves to help set the policies that will affect them.

"There are many facets to the farm bill. There are many pieces of legislation that will affect the farm bill," said Gangwish. "There will be more debate on clean water, clean air, the environment and conservation reserve. Corn growers have to be prepared. If we don't take the opportunity to take the lead on the issues that affect us, we forfeit the chance to have a voice in the outcome.

"We have to assess which battles we can influence and which ones we can win. And even if we can't win an issue, we must at least speak our piece," said Gangwish.

Eleven years ago, Gangwish began participating in the local corn growers association's group in Buffalo County, Neb. "NCGA was an organization bettering a segment of agriculture I was interested in," he said. "It gave me a chance to make a difference and have a voice in what's important to me. In some small way, I felt I could participate in bringing new products to market."

That interest in new products still drives Gangwish. Policy decisions made in Washington, D.C. will continue to profoundly affect the growth of new market opportunities, he believes.

"New uses for agricultural commodities will be a major part of the '95 farm bill," said Gangwish. "There are indications that the federal government will be moving away from traditional farm payments and is looking toward supporting new uses and new products to increase demand for corn. As corn growers, we must use resources like partnership dollars that we find in the government to help us search for new uses and new demand for our crop."

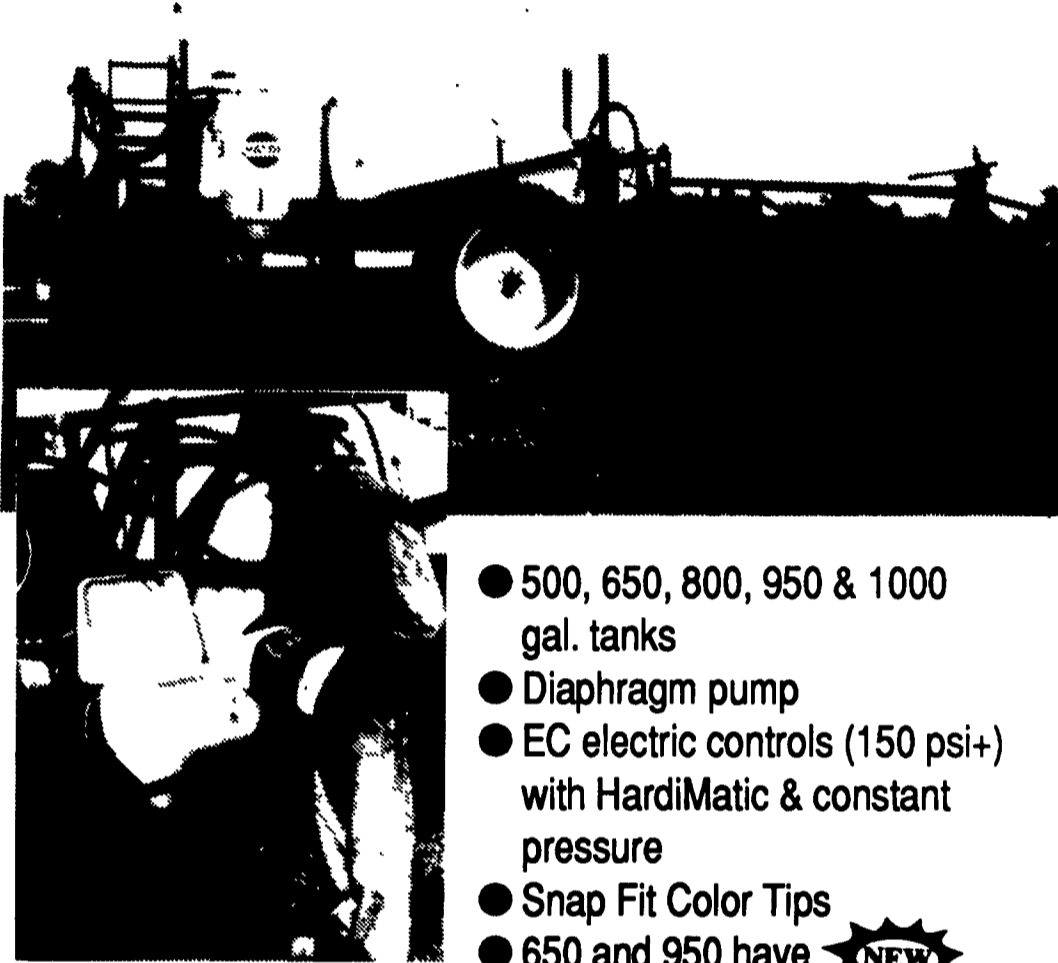
During the past several years, corn growers have worked diligently to increase demand for ethanol. And Gangwish expects that struggle to continue, even though the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently granted a 30 percent market share over two years to renewable fuels in areas participating in the Clean Air Act's Reformulated Gasoline (RFG) program.

"As long as ethanol is competing against Big Oil, farmers will have to champion the fight to maintain and expand this 500 million bushel market."


Also this year, Gangwish will guide NCGA through the transition period of changing chief executive officers (CEO). Iowa farm native Christine Wehrman now leads NCGA as CEO.

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