

# Ag Day Salutes The Farm Community

## National Ag Day Brings Agriculture Closer to Home

MINNEAPOLIS- Few consumers today can claim a tie to a farming operation, but they may be closer to agriculture than they think.

That's the assertion of the Ag Council of America (ACA), a group that coordinates National Ag Day, which will be held next Saturday, March 20.

"You don't have to farm to be involved in agriculture," said Eldon White, president of ACA. "The chain of goods and services connected with agriculture stretches far and wide. You may work at a bank, a manufacturing company or an advertising agency in even the most urban areas and still be connected with agriculture."

National Ag Day has been held annually since 1973. It was created to call attention to the wide-ranging influence of agriculture and demonstrate its value to our society, said White.

U.S. Rep. Larry Combest (R-Texas), chairman of the agriculture committee in the House of Representatives, said agriculture does not get much attention in our society because the reliability of our food and fiber system is rarely in question.

"Being dependable, agriculture is taken for granted by a large segment of our population," he pointed out.

To create awareness for

agriculture in 1999, the ACA will conduct a campaign it calls "America's Largest Classroom on Agriculture."

This campaign explains the role of agriculture to school children, and the vision of this campaign is to "reach classrooms with exciting materials that help students learn about the vital role agriculture plays," said Joyce Spicher, ACA chairperson.

In addition, numerous activities will be held in Washington, DC, to stress the importance of "agricultural literacy" in United States schools.

A briefing will be held for key congressional and federal media secretaries prior to National Ag Day, special classroom activities will be held in schools in the Washington, DC, inner-city school district, and a luncheon will be held March 17 with US Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman (invited) to discuss the importance of National Ag Day.

"Too often, the only time agriculture makes the news is when there's a food scare of some sort," says Spicher. "It may be contamination, lost crops or rising prices. But the reality is that our nation has the safest, most economical food supply in the world."

Yet, despite the reliability and safety of our food supply,

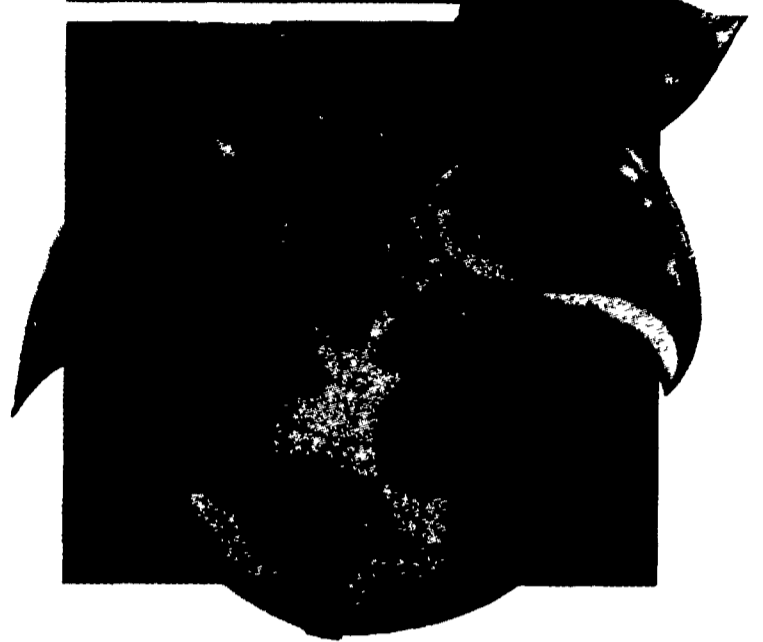
the industry continues to look for ways to deliver an even better product to consumers, Spicher said.

For example, farmers and ranchers are producing meat lower in fat and cholesterol. Beef today has 27 percent less fat by the time it reaches the grocery store than it did in 1985. Today's fruits stay fresh longer because of advancements in research. And resources are being used more wisely through techniques such as precision farming, which utilizes satellite technology to place fertilizer and chemicals where they are needed and in the amounts that are needed.

"While it is nice to be dependable," says Combest, "it would be nicer to be known for that dependability. That is where National Ag Day begins, appropriately on the first day of spring, March 20. This is more than the celebration of the hard work of the men and women involved in agriculture - it is an education of sorts."

"The prior week, National Ag Week, promotes America's Largest Classroom on Agriculture. Recognizing today's students as tomorrow's consumers, the Agriculture Council of America is dedicated to teaching future generations about the important role agriculture plays in daily life."

# AG DAY



## Companies Share Ties

MINNEAPOLIS - Many of today's largest companies owe at least part of their bottom line to agriculture.

For example, Pfizer, which is in the headlines almost daily for the product Viagra, also develops and markets pharmaceuticals for livestock. Monsanto, which created products such as NutraSweet, is one of the largest biotechnology companies in agriculture. And Caterpillar, better known for its mammoth construction and industrial equipment, is a rising force in American agriculture, manufacturing tractors, combines and other equipment that is used daily on American farms.

Caterpillar Agricultural Products president Robert Strube, said Caterpillar sees tremendous opportunities in agriculture, and it is continually adding resources to meet the demands of this market. "In the past year, we've added several new products to our lineup, announced plans to construct a combine manufacturing facility near Omaha, Nebraska, and we've broadened our agricultural equipment manufacturing capabilities at our plant in DeKalb, Illinois."

Strube said Caterpillar's reputation for quality, strength and durability in the construction and mining industry has translated well in agriculture. "We became a leader by designing and manufacturing equipment that retains value for the contractors who purchase them," he said. "Our agricultural equipment is the same way. We strive to create equipment that brings the most value to the farmer and holds this value through its lifetime."

Caterpillar offers a line of seven different agricultural tractors and five combines to the agricultural market for use in a variety of crops. It also sells products such as skid steer loaders and telehandlers, which are used around the farmyard for duties such as cleaning barns and moving hay bales. In addition, Caterpillar diesel engines provide power for farm equipment such as irrigation systems and generators.

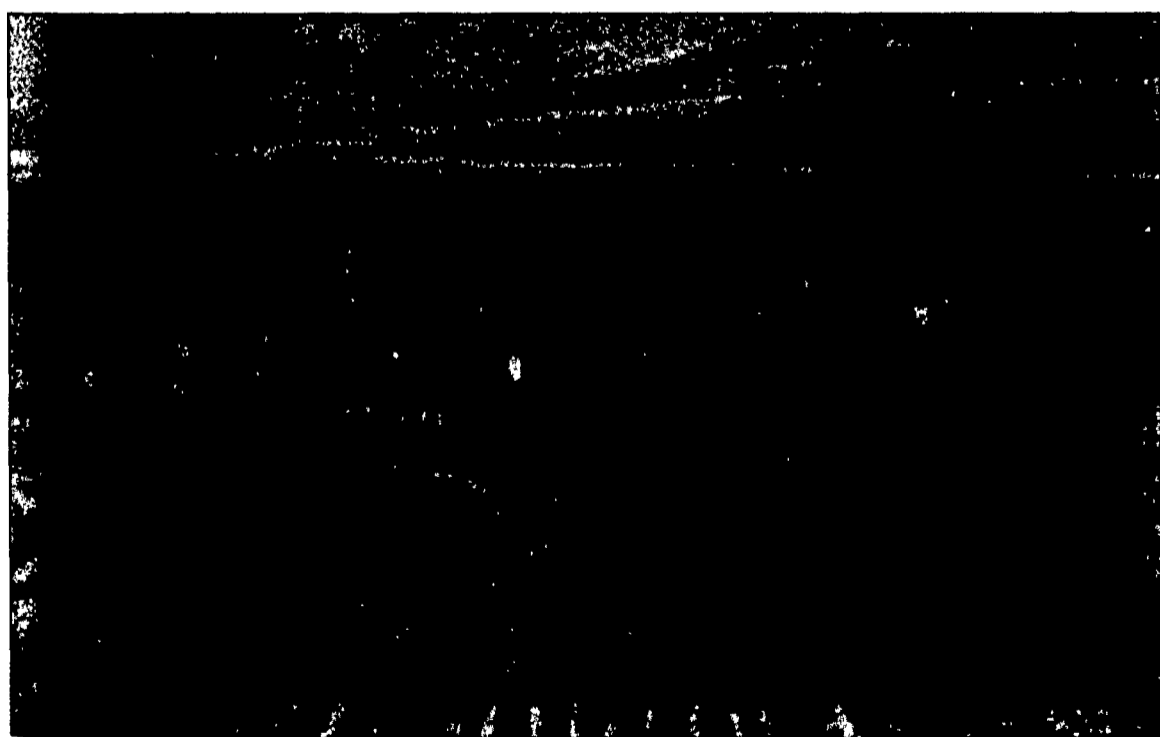
Strube said Caterpillar has introduced new technologies to farming that allow farmers to do more with less, thus increasing productivity and reducing costs.

Technology has been a primary reason agriculture has made such huge strides in recent decades, said Eldon White, president of the Agriculture Council of America. "Crop yields have risen, allowing farmers to feed the world without increasing the amount of tilled acres," he said. "In the end, it's the consumer who benefits from these changes, as food prices remain economical, while the quality and variety of food products improve and grow."

One innovation from Caterpillar is the use of tracks rather than wheels for moving across fields. "Track-type equipment is more fuel efficient, it offers superior traction and it can get into fields even when the soil is wet," Strube said. "It does this while compacting the soil less than wheeled tractors. In the end, this allows farmers to get more out of their equipment and out of each acre of land."

Caterpillar also has taken its service models for industries such as construction and mining and applied them to farming. "We are used to providing service in areas where it's not efficient to haul equipment into the shop each time it needs servicing," Strube said. "Caterpillar dealers go to the customer, rather than making the customer come to them, saving the customer time and improving the efficiency of the farming operation."

All of these changes at Caterpillar, Strube said, show that the company views agriculture as an important part of its future.



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## Profile Of The Farmer

- Nearly two million people farm or ranch in the United States. Almost 90 percent of U.S. farms are operated by individuals or family corporations. More than 15 percent of the U.S. population is employed in farm or farm-related jobs, including production agriculture, farm inputs, processing and marketing, and wholesale

and retail sales.

- According to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, 47 percent of the farmers were 55 years of age or older which was up only two percent from 1987. During the same period, there were two percent fewer farmers under the

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