

Harvest Ends With New Offerings From John Deere

MOLINE, Ill. — As the last loads of grain come out of the field, many farmers immediately begin to look at next year. For some, next year may include a new equipment purchase.

However, in 1999, the headlines all are screaming doom and gloom for agriculture, which would seem to dampen farmers' buying enthusiasm for new equipment. Still, at least one company's actions show it believes agriculture's future is bright.

John Deere recently made it clear that it expects better times ahead for agriculture

as it announced one of its most aggressive new product introductions in years. Among other items, John Deere rolled out new combines, tractors, and skid steer loaders.

Such an aggressive launch seems to go against the public television documentaries that have aired, the special hearings on Capitol Hill, and the websites, such as www.farmcrisis.net, set up to document the struggles in agriculture. But John Deere spokesperson Barry Nelson explained that the timing of this launch makes sense given the company's philoso-

phy of bringing new and better products to market to increase farming efficiency, which, in turn, reduces the cost of production.

"When prices are low, the best way to compete is to cut the cost of production. These new machines help farmers do that," Nelson emphasized.

John Deere seems to be on to something if the reaction at Husker Harvest, in Grand Island, Neb., in mid-September is any indication. Farmers showed up by the thousands during the three-day show to check out new equipment demonstrated by John Deere. This was the first

public viewing of many of these machines in action, including the new STS (single tine) separation combines.

Ron Moron, senior sales and service representative, said the new 50 Series combines, including the STS models, allow farmers to meet the demands of today's farming operation, which includes harvesting in tough conditions, such as green-stemmed beans, and squeezing more acres into each day's harvest.

"These machines are designed to provide more comfort and control, require

less service and be more productive," he said. "Easy servicing, increased capacity and improved grain quality are just a few of the advantages farmers will appreciate on the new 50 series."

In addition to the new combines, Deere began selling a new line of high-power tracked tractors. The new 9000T Series tractors were unveiled at farm shows in 1998, and they became available for purchase this year. These tractors feature John Deere 12.5 L Powertech engines, a wide 106-inch tread spacing for greater stability, 111-inch wheelbase for added traction and flotation, a large 60-inch drive wheel to reduce track slippage, and a choice of two track sizes: 30 and 36 inches. They also can be ballasted to 50,000 pounds.

Kelly Granatier, division manager for John Deere 9000 Series 4-Wheel-Drives and the new 9000T Series tractors, said, "We brought in farmers from across the country who use tracked tractors to get their input, suggestions, critiques, and comments to make sure that the 360-hp 9300T and 425-hp 9400T tractors would fit their needs.

"Customers wanted more power to the ground, hill-hugging stability, better traction, and the ability to work light in the spring, heavy in the fall. Farmers tell us from their experience this fall that we've met their needs. We want to continue our philosophy of giving customers a choice between tires and tracks. These two new tractor models help round out our large horsepower tractor lineup."

Recent press releases from John Deere show the company is realistic about its sales prospects given the current farm economy, and it expects a decline in demand for retail farm equipment of 30 to 35 percent in North America this fiscal year and declines of 10 to 15 percent in other major markets.

However, Nelson said the number of new offerings in 1999 demonstrate the company's commitment to agriculture and its focus on bringing the best products to market. "John Deere has always been committed to the agricultural market, and these new introductions should leave little doubt about our intentions for the future," he concluded.

Big Operators Look Toward Improved Harvest



The new STS combines from John Deere made their debut at Husker Harvest in Grand Island, Neb. Here, farm-

ers get closer look at the performance of the machine.