

Editor's Notebook



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Deere Finally Introduces Its Rotary Combine

After decades of saying Case-IH, Gleaner and New Holland rotary combines couldn't match the performance of its conventional combines, Deere & Company finally went public last month with its own line of rotary combines at its headquarters in Moline, Ill.

Deere didn't like it when reporters kept calling the new machines "rotaries", but that's what they appear to be. Deere prefers to refer to the new machines as "STS" combines named for the "Single Tine Separation" feature on the new machine's rotor.



It's been widely known that Deere has had a prototype rotary combine in testing since the 1970's. In fact, Deere has a number of patents for rotary combines (FARM SHOW ran a story on one 15 years ago). But the company has always stated that they didn't feel rotary technology was as good as its conventional combines.

What also makes Deere's move interesting is that sales of new combines have dropped to unprecedented low levels in recent years. Less than 8,000 new combines were sold in 1998, according to the Equipment Manufacturer's Institute, and only about 4,000 machines have been sold in 1999.

Company officials told reporters that engineers actually bought rotary machines from competing manufacturers and took them apart piece-by-piece in order to "design around" the weaknesses of those machines. In fact, they showed the media a side-by-side comparison of the new STS rotary with a Case-IH's Axial Flow machine. The company says its new single tine-separation system is more reliable in all crop conditions, requires less horsepower, and provides up to 20 percent more capacity. The name refers to the way it threshes, using separator tines that comb crop material over separator grates.

Improved feeding performance is the key feature. "We've overcome the feeding limitations that can occur in conventional rotary combines, especially in moist, green conditions," says a spokesman.

The new combines are also easier to service and don't have to be greased as often as conventional rotaries, says the company. You have great access to the separator body, and no tools are necessary to access it. You just pull some pins. There are fewer grease points than on the company's previous combines and service lights provide 360 degree lighting all the way around the machine. You can even turn on lights illuminating the separator inside the machine.

More On The "Smart Spud"

We got an interesting e-mail from a fellow named Tom Haan, co-owner of PEI Innovations Inc., in Prince Edward Island, Canada. He informed us that he is one of the developers of

the "Smart Spud" that we featured in our last issue.

The Smart Spud is an electronic potato filled with sensors and transmitters. It is sent through harvesting and processing equipment to adjust the machines to do minimal damage. Haan informed us that contrary to what was stated in the story, Frank Pirie in Scotland is not the inventor. He is a European dealer.

He also informed us that he is working on a complete line of crop models including corn. The idea is to run an electronic ear of corn through a combine to get it set correctly.

Tom Haan's e-mail address is: tom@dundasdesign.com. We hope to have more details on his "Smart Ear Of Corn" in an upcoming issue.

Got A Lemon? Here's Where To Go

If you've got a "worst buy" lemon product, you might want to check out this web site on the internet for a comprehensive state-by-state listing of lemon laws. It tells you where to go, who to contact, and what you have to do to qualify under each state law to legally return your "lemon" to the manufacturer for a full refund: <http://www.pond.net/~delvis/lemon.links.html>.

You might also want to take a minute to tell FARM SHOW about your problem product (or "best buy" product). We'll probably publish your report in our next issue. (Mail to: FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044)

Iowa Inventor Creating "New Breed" Of Farm Equipment

Iowa farmer Brian Moeller is a man with a mission.

After years of watching and reading about narrow row planters and cultivators, site specific cropping, and GPS applications of fertilizer and other inputs, he realized there was something missing. Despite all the advances in equipment, there was still no quick and easy way to change row widths to adapt to various terrain.

That prompted Moeller to come up with what he says will be a totally new breed of machines which he calls Variable-Width Farm Equipment. "What if you could plant 30-in. corn in the morning and 20-in. beans in the afternoon using the same planter? And all that would be required to change row spacing would be the pull of a hydraulic lever. You could even switch on-the-go from 38-in. rows on poor soil to 15-in. rows on your best ground."

Moeller has a patent pending on his new concept which he has submitted to a number of equipment manufacturers for evaluation. Essentially, it consists of pivoting tool bar wings mounted on a center beam. To narrow up the rows, the toolbar wings angle backward. The toolbar wings are fitted with a parallel linkage that changes the angle of the planter units, cultivator shanks, or other equipment mounted on it. Moeller calls it a "collapsing parallelogram" and says the design could be adapted to planters, cultivators, and chisel plows.

"Unlike other technologies that lock out smaller farmers, this concept will benefit everyone. It can be used for 4-row equipment as well as 16-row.

"There are many benefits to the concept. You could use the wider setting for the first knock-down pass in the spring or when there's a lot of residue. Then you can narrow up the setting for finishing the seedbed. And in real weedy areas you can narrow up even more. If the shovels on a cultivator start wearing out, you can merely narrow up the implement rather than having to stop to change shovels. And on a wet day, when weeds tend to escape between shovels, you can just collapse the machine to get them all.

"I feel this is one of the first universal concepts to come along in a long while. It will benefit all farmers, not just the top 15 percent who can justify the biggest, most expensive equipment."

Moeller would like to hear from readers to get their comments on the design. He hopes to license his concept to a manufacturer in the next year. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Brian Moeller, 3126 Valley Ave., Lohrville, Iowa 51453 (ph 515 467-5550).

Great Gift Idea For Christmas!

If you've got a hard-to-buy for farmer or rancher on your Christmas gift list this year, why not do your shopping right here?

Many readers who gave FARM SHOW for Christmas last year wrote to tell us they've never given a gift which generated so much response from appreciative recipients.

Your first gift subscription is \$15.95 (\$23.95 Canadian). Each additional gift is only \$9.95 (\$14.95 Canadian). If you like, you can give the "First Gift" to yourself as a one-year extension of your own FARM SHOW subscription, entitling you to give reduced rate gift subscriptions to friends, relatives, business associates, students, or others.

Use the handy order form inserted elsewhere in this issue to order your Christmas gift subscriptions, or call us toll-free at 1-800-834-9665.

Toyota's New Full-Size Pickup

When Toyota entered the large pickup truck market in 1992 with its 6-cyl. T-100, it was pretty much a flop. The truck wasn't big enough or powerful enough to challenge trucks from the Big Three domestic manufacturers.

But now Toyota is out with its new 8-cyl. Tundra. Popular Mechanics Magazine recently put the truck through its paces. "It's so much better than the T-100 it replaces that it's difficult to compare the two. The interior has been greatly improved in both style and comfort, although the rear seat in the extended cab version is tight compared to other trucks. It has a 245-hp. double-overhead-cam engine which is the smoothest and quietest truck engine we've ever encountered. It's much quicker to 60 mph than domestic full-sized trucks and gets the best gas mileage. The biggest drawback to the Tundra is the size of the bed. It's significantly smaller than those of competing trucks. But overall, it's a respectable entry into the world of full-size trucks."



Surprisingly, the magazine ranked Toyota's truck ahead of popular Dodge Ram pickups, saying, "The competition has caught up with and passed the once innovative Dodge Ram."

"The Best Is Yet To Come"

This is a true story.

There was a woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and was given 3 months to live. As she began getting her things "in order", she called her pastor and asked him to come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she wanted read, and what dress she wanted to be buried in. She also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible in her left hand.

Everything was in order and as the pastor was preparing to leave, the woman suddenly remembered one final request that was very important to her. "Please Pastor, just one more thing", she said excitedly. "Sure, what is it?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important to me," the woman continued. "I want to be buried holding a fork in my right hand."

The pastor gazed at the woman, at a loss for words. "That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked. The pastor replied, "Well to be quite honest, I'm puzzled by the request."

The woman explained. "You see, Pastor, in all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I remember that when the dishes were being cleared after the main course, someone would inevitably lean over to me and say, 'Keep your fork'. It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming, like velvety chocolate cake or deep dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance to end the great meal."

The pastor listened intently and a smile came upon his face. The woman continued, "So I just want people to see me there in the casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder, 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them: 'Keep your fork...the best is yet to come'."