

# FARM EQUIPMENT

September 2024  
Farm-Equipment.com

Business Strategies for the Agriculture Industry

Myers

Martin

FARM EQUIPMENT  
**SHORTLINE  
LEGENDS**

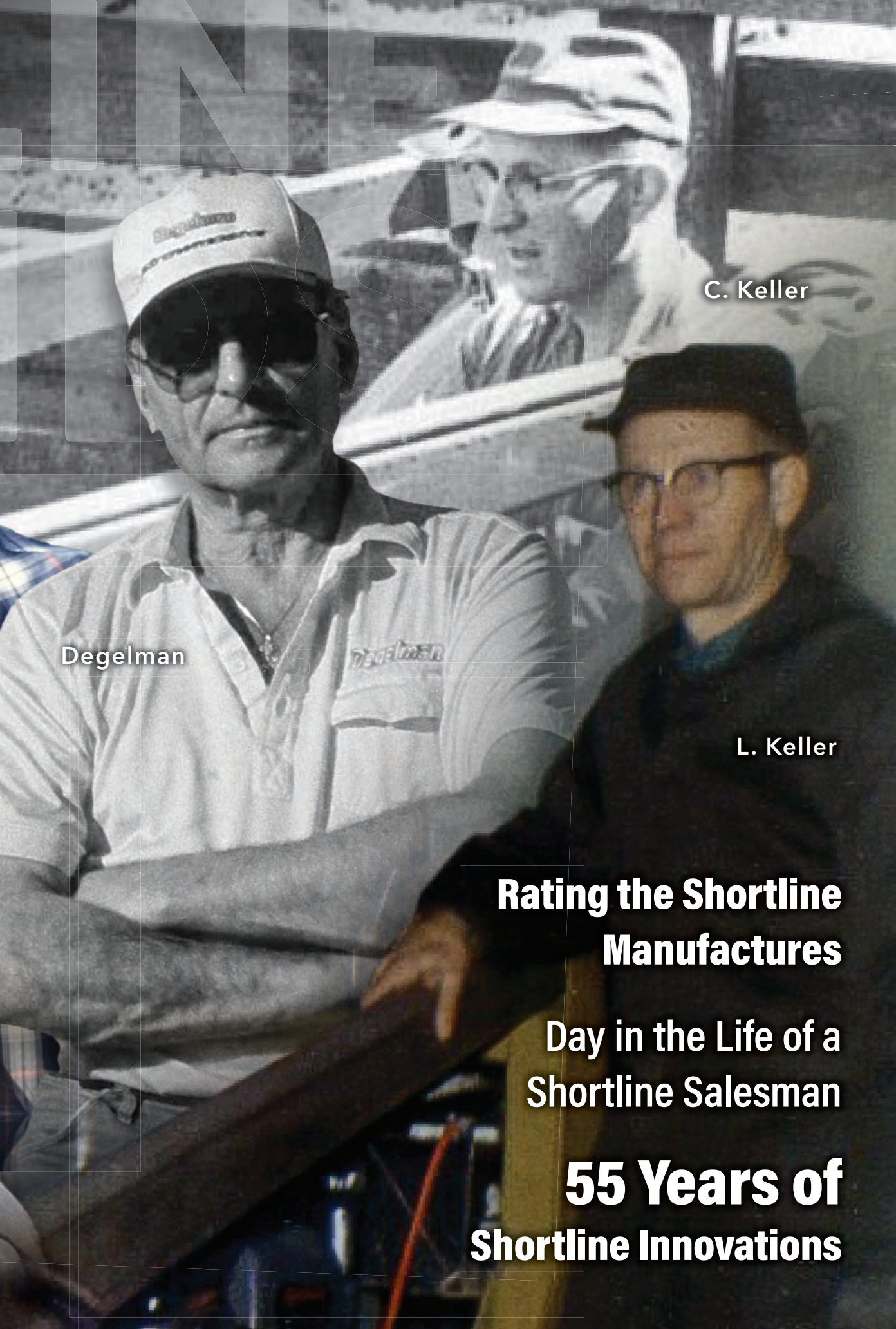
— Hall of Fame —

**CLASS**  
*of*  
**2024**

Unverferth

**Special Section:  
Rural Lifestyle  
Equipment**





Degelman

C. Keller

L. Keller

## **Rating the Shortline Manufactures**

**Day in the Life of a  
Shortline Salesman**

**55 Years of  
Shortline Innovations**





**1995**

First floating row cleaner (C125) produced; tested our prototype of parallel link row cleaner. Farm Journal reports a 12-bu. increase using floating vs. rigid pin or screw-adjust.

Started manufacturing the Kinze floating cleaner at the farm, allowing us to keep the same crew year around and providing much-needed revenue during off season.



**1996**

Patent issued on 2-stage closing system with spike wheels and rear rubber finishing wheel.



**2006**

Martin's Floating Row Cleaner receives "Reader's Choice" recognition from *No-Till Farmer* subscribers for best planter attachment, and it's also named No-Till's Overall Best Product in the inaugural program. Martin would receive 8 total awards in the 11-year program.



**NO-TILL  
PRODUCT OF  
THE YEAR**





# FARM EQUIPMENT SHORTLINE LEGENDS

## Howard's Legend From His Peers

**I'm confident Howard knew the lasting impact he made on no-till planting technology that will be recognized for generations to come.**

*— Frank Lessiter, Editor, No-Till Farmer*

**It's been very rewarding to watch Martin Industries grow from a small farm shop business to a nationally known product.**

*— John Bradley, no-till innovator & retired director of the Univ. of Tennessee, Milan Experiment Station, Milan, Tenn.*

**The explanation Howard offered on why his row cleaner worked best, from the diameter of the row cleaner wheel, the tooth spacing on the row cleaner wheel, to how many tines his row cleaner wheel had gave me the confidence to sell his products for over 30 years. Howard was among the most down to earth and humble people you could ever meet.**

*— David Moeller, Moeller Ag Services, Keota, Iowa*

**Howard recognized early on that a device which parted the previous crop residue and lightly scratched the seed zone would accelerate soil warming and dramatically improved emergence uniformity. His passion for making long-term no-till successful in challenging soils has helped my clients over a wide geography.**

*— Phil Needham, Needham Ag Technologies, Calhoun, Ky.*

**2015**

Started working on parallel link super compact row cleaner (ACCR) with integrated air cylinder. Released ACCR floating parallel link row cleaner (patent pending 2017).



**2017**

Howard Martin was named a No-Till Farmer Living Legend in 2017. Howard Martin started no-tilling to earn a decent living from poor-quality land and developed specialized no-till equipment, such as planter row cleaners, in his farm shop. Martin's success led to the formation of Martin Industries, among today's leaders in producing no-till planter and drill accessories.



**2019**

Steve Martin podcast  
Use the QR code at right to listen to this Ag Entrepreneurs podcast where Steve Martin explains the origins of the company.  
[Farm-Equipment.com/Steve-Martin](https://Farm-Equipment.com/Steve-Martin)

Howard Martin Videos  
Use the QR code at left to watch this series of quick-hit videos, including an on-location video in Howard's farm shop.  
[No-TillFarmer.com/Howard-Martin](https://No-TillFarmer.com/Howard-Martin)

**FARM EQUIPMENT**  
**PODCAST**

**How We Did It:**  
Conversations with  
Ag Equipment's Entrepreneurs





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Business Strategies for the Ag Machinery Industry

September 2024

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## ON THE COVER

The 2024 class of *Farm Equipment's* Shortline Legends Hall of Fame includes (pictured above from l-r) Wilf Degelman, Richard Unverferth, Howard Martin, Al Myers and Cyril & Louis Keller. Cover design by Jeff Lazewski.

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# Meet Vi

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- Operate the system to circulate the refrigerant and produce normal pressures, then shut it off.
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Create a better  
customer experience

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**Sean Young** | Assistant General Manager, Young's Equipment

Book a Demo





# Evaluate Your Bench Strength

If you or one of your managers left the business today, has someone been identified who's ready to step up and in? If you've been doing your job correctly, the transition to

your successor should be seamless and almost unnoticeable.

Earlier this month, 219 attendees — including 45 dealerships from across the U.S. and Canada — joined us in Madison,

Wis., for the 10th Dealership Minds Summit to work-shop how to plan and execute managerial transitions (p. 20). During his kickoff presentation, Titan Machinery CEO B.J. Knutson said, "10,000 baby boomers a week are exiting the workforce. We're going to continue to need to build out our teams as we go, and as we do that, we'll need to keep in mind the different characteristics of the different generations as we're doing that."

For Knutson, building an A-team — and making sure the bench is full to fill the inevitable vacancies — starts with recruitment.

While that means being out in the community and engaging early and often with schools, Knutson places a large emphasis on specific qualities and characteristics.

"There's a saying that you want to look for the kids who are coming off dairy farms because they're the hardest workers," he says. "I've certainly found that to be true, since work ethic is hard to teach." Next on his

list are passion — again something hard to teach; you either have it or you don't — and personal integrity.

"Turnover is going to happen. It can be hard to predict, but it's going to happen. That's one of the reasons I start with recruitment," he says.

**Beyond Recruitment.** Having the bodies to draw from isn't enough. To prepare your people for the next step, time and energy must be invested into their mentoring and training. Some of that happens naturally and via leading by example, something this year's class of Shortline Legends Hall of Fame inductees profoundly exhibited (p. 30). Yet not everything can be learned by osmosis. If you see potential in some people, take the time to share that observation, nurture them and give them the time and attention they deserve to grow. It should be a compulsory duty of every position, to prepare for the day the baton is handed off.

**Ask the Right Questions.** I picked up a great tip during a roundtable at the Summit about seeking

new department managers. Instead of the limiting question of "Do you want to be the new parts manager?," Moving Iron's Casey Seymour relies on a less absolute line of questioning. He probes about areas one might be interested in grow-

ing into. For one, this doesn't create a sticky situation if they prove to be a poor fit for the job. And at the same time, it lets them know you're interested in their future in the business and want to see them grow.

Building your team is a job that's never quite done, but getting the right people in the right spots is rewarding. And when done right, the transition of roles can be seamless. **FE**



Kim Schmidt, Executive Editor

***As leaders, it's our responsibility to create an environment that supports and empowers each team member to reach their full potential...***

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# Square Balers



MANUFACTURER	MODEL	YEAR	EQUIPMENT CLASS	USED CASH VALUE	MSRP
Case IH	LB334 XL	2023	Big Square	<b>\$113,194</b>	\$169,534
Case IH	LB334 XL	2022	Big Square	<b>\$96,186</b>	\$161,225
Case IH	LB434 XL	2023	Big Square	<b>\$137,630</b>	\$206,139
Case IH	LB434 XL	2022	Big Square	<b>\$112,398</b>	\$196,067
Case IH	LB436 HD	2023	Big Square	<b>\$206,440</b>	\$309,518
Case IH	LB436 XL	2022	Big Square	<b>\$166,044</b>	\$293,682
Case IH	SB531	2023	Square	<b>\$23,676</b>	\$35,461
Case IH	SB531	2022	Square	<b>\$21,004</b>	\$33,050
Case IH	SB541	2023	Square	<b>\$28,442</b>	\$42,606
Case IH	SB541	2022	Square	<b>\$24,116</b>	\$37,943
CLAAS	5300 Fine Cut	2023	Big Square	<b>\$183,174</b>	\$271,702
CLAAS	5300 Fine Cut	2022	Big Square	<b>\$138,474</b>	\$236,674
CLAAS	5300 Roto Cut	2023	Big Square	<b>\$177,050</b>	\$262,624
CLAAS	5300 Roto Cut	2022	Big Square	<b>\$126,940</b>	\$216,943
CLAAS	5300 Roto Feed	2023	Big Square	<b>\$161,792</b>	\$239,998
CLAAS	5300 Roto Feed	2022	Big Square	<b>\$115,556</b>	\$197,493
John Deere	328	2023	Square	<b>\$21,808</b>	\$31,716
John Deere	328	2022	Square	<b>\$18,092</b>	\$28,318
John Deere	338	2023	Square	<b>\$24,020</b>	\$34,939
John Deere	338	2022	Square	<b>\$19,934</b>	\$31,196
John Deere	348	2023	Square	<b>\$26,458</b>	\$38,471
John Deere	348	2022	Square	<b>\$21,958</b>	\$34,349
John Deere	L331	2023	Big Square	<b>\$121,988</b>	\$175,566
John Deere	L331	2022	Big Square	<b>\$106,430</b>	\$164,387
John Deere	L341	2023	Big Square	<b>\$147,358</b>	\$212,087
John Deere	L341	2022	Big Square	<b>\$128,562</b>	\$198,583
Krone	BP 4x4	2023	Big Square	<b>\$181,024</b>	\$260,540
Krone	BP 4x4	2022	Big Square	<b>\$144,060</b>	\$230,740
Krone	BP1290	2023	Big Square	<b>\$155,018</b>	\$223,120
Krone	BP1290	2022	Big Square	<b>\$126,036</b>	\$201,880
Krone	BP1290 Gen5	2023	Big Square	<b>\$173,426</b>	\$249,610

MANUFACTURER	MODEL	YEAR	EQUIPMENT CLASS	USED CASH VALUE	MSRP
Krone	BP1290 Gen5	2022	Big Square	<b>\$126,324</b>	\$199,909
Krone	BP1290 HDP II	2023	Big Square	<b>\$279,848</b>	\$402,790
Krone	BP1290 HDP II	2022	Big Square	<b>\$201,092</b>	\$318,204
Krone	BP870	2023	Big Square	<b>\$154,062</b>	\$221,740
Krone	BP870	2022	Big Square	<b>\$118,036</b>	\$181,095
Krone	BP890	2023	Big Square	<b>\$118,276</b>	\$170,230
Krone	BP890	2022	Big Square	<b>\$100,556</b>	\$156,330
Massey Ferguson	1838	2022	Square	<b>\$20,434</b>	\$28,864
Massey Ferguson	1840	2023	Square	<b>\$30,334</b>	\$42,799
Massey Ferguson	1840	2022	Square	<b>\$24,590</b>	\$34,043
Massey Ferguson	1842	2022	Square	<b>\$30,384</b>	\$42,897
Massey Ferguson	1844S	2023	Square	<b>\$75,974</b>	\$107,226
Massey Ferguson	1844S	2022	Square	<b>\$65,500</b>	\$90,257
Massey Ferguson	2250	2022	Big Square	<b>\$85,996</b>	\$134,410
Massey Ferguson	2270	2022	Big Square	<b>\$117,756</b>	\$176,981
Massey Ferguson	2270XD	2022	Big Square	<b>\$125,216</b>	\$201,574
Massey Ferguson	2290	2022	Big Square	<b>\$124,940</b>	\$201,148
Massey Ferguson	LB2233	2023	Big Square	<b>\$110,278</b>	\$158,727
Massey Ferguson	LB2234	2023	Big Square	<b>\$146,770</b>	\$211,245
Massey Ferguson	LB2234XD	2023	Big Square	<b>\$166,054</b>	\$239,004
Massey Ferguson	LB2244	2023	Big Square	<b>\$165,714</b>	\$238,503
New Holland	330 Plus	2023	Big Square	<b>\$114,252</b>	\$169,534
New Holland	330 Plus	2022	Big Square	<b>\$81,246</b>	\$161,225
New Holland	340 HD	2023	Big Square	<b>\$208,264</b>	\$309,030
New Holland	340 HD	2022	Big Square	<b>\$149,400</b>	\$293,993
New Holland	340 Plus	2023	Big Square	<b>\$138,930</b>	\$206,139
New Holland	340 Plus	2022	Big Square	<b>\$98,814</b>	\$196,067
New Holland	BC5060	2022	Square	<b>\$21,424</b>	\$33,050
New Holland	BC5070	2022	Square	<b>\$24,600</b>	\$37,943
New Holland	Hayliner 265	2023	Square	<b>\$25,130</b>	\$35,461
New Holland	Hayliner 275	2023	Square	<b>\$30,190</b>	\$42,606

**NEED MORE DETAIL?** Values shown here represent the most commonly equipped options with typical usage hours on equipment of this age. For more detailed values use [IronGuides.com](https://www.ironguides.com), the only online appraisal tool for agricultural equipment that adjusts for your machine's unique region, options, and usage. All of the equipment included in the selection appeared in the latest dataset from IronGuides.



**Doosan Robotics** will merge with **Doosan Bobcat** by early 2025. Prior to the merger, Doosan Robotics will take over Bobcat as a wholly owned subsidiary.

**CNH** announced the appointment of **Ryan Schaefer** as new vice president of **New Holland Ag North America**.

**Associated Equipment Distributors (AED)** announced that **Deep Southern Equipment Dealers Association (DSEDA)** will be co-locating its annual meeting at AED's 2025 Summit on Jan. 15-17 in Orlando, Fla.

**AGCO** entered into an agreement to sell the majority of its Grain & Protein business to **American Industrial Partners ("AIP")** in a transaction valued at \$700 million.

**H & R Agri-Power** announced **Tom Sutter** will be joining its organization as its new chief operating officer. Sutter was most recently president and CEO of LandPro Equipment LLC in Batavia, N.Y.

**Salford Group**, Canadian manufacturer of tillage, crop fertilizer and application equipment, will close its Osceola, Iowa, manufacturing plant and will lay off 51 workers.

**Monarch Tractor** raised \$133 million for its Series C, making it the largest funding raising round in agricultural robotics history.

**Alamo Group Inc.** announced Aug. 16 the sale of its Herschel Parts business to **F.P. Bourgault Tillage Tools Ltd.**

**Deer & Co.** reported its third quarter net income of \$1.7 billion on Aug. 15. Worldwide net sales and revenues decreased 17%, to \$13.152 billion, for the third quarter of 2024.

The **Canadian Equipment Dealers Assn. (CEDA)** Board of Directors ratified a membership vote to merge with **Associated Equipment Distributors (AED)**. The merger is scheduled to be finalized by Nov. 1. **FE**

## Dealers on the MOVE

Brought to you by Pinion.

*This is an ongoing project of Farm Equipment and the Machinery Advisors Consortium. Dealers wishing to share their news can contact Kim Schmidt (kschmidt@lessitermedia.com).*

**Claas Farmpoint** opened a new dealership in Le Mars, IA on July 15. The dealership provides mobile maintenance and parts service for forage harvester, tractors, balers and other hay and forage equipment.

**Atlantic & Southern Equipment LLC (AGCO)** acquired the operating assets of **Bridges Equipment** in Brinson, Ga., as of June 14, 2024.

**Florida Coast Equipment (Kubota)** announced the acquisition of Polk Tractor Company, a well-established Kubota dealership in Winter Haven, Fla.

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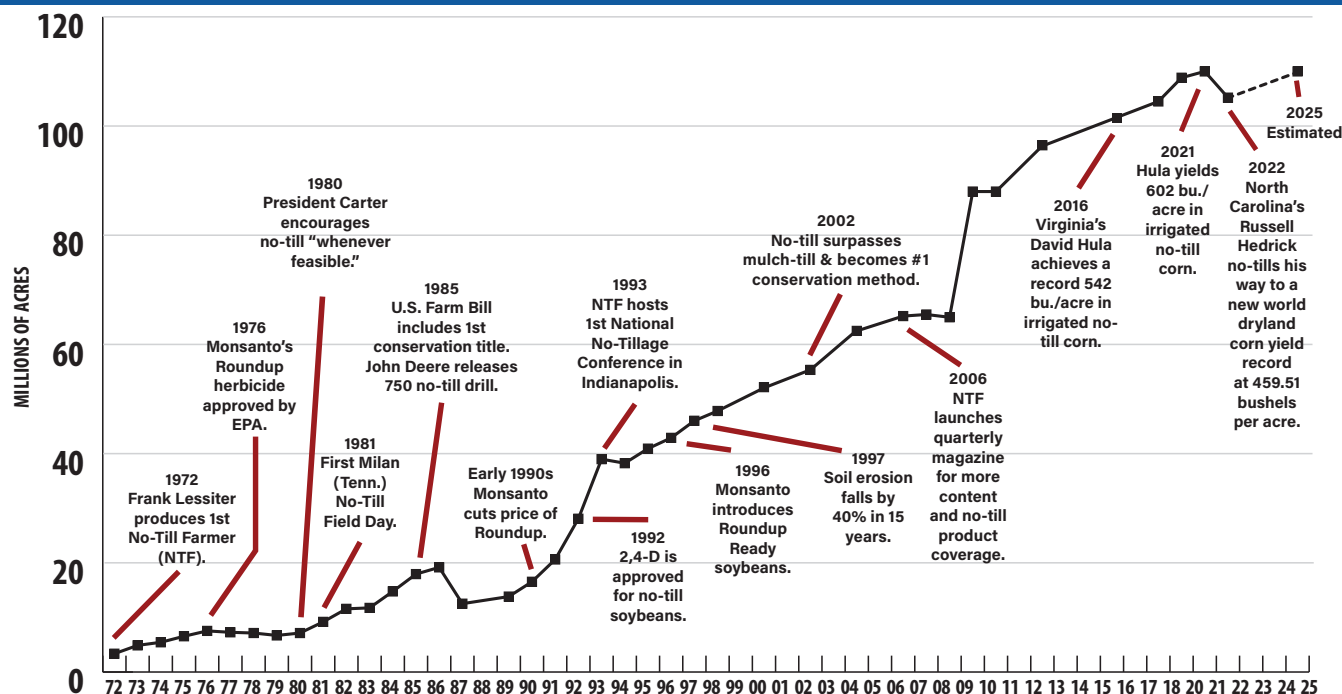


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## No-Till By the Numbers — History



The number of no-till acres in the U.S. declined from 2021 to 2022. The most recent USDA Census of Agriculture reported 105.2 million no-till acres in the U.S. as of 2022. *No-Till Farmer* editor Frank Lessiter projects that number will increase to 110 million acres by 2025, but low commodity prices may spur greater adoption of conservation practices that save labor, fuel and inputs.

SOURCES: No-Till Farmer No-Till Practices Surveys, Conservation Technology Information Center, USDA Census Data

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Phone (614) 873-4620



# Dealers Strategize & Network at 10th Dealership Minds Summit

With a theme of Planning & Executing Transitional Management, the 10th Dealership Minds Summit provided 2 days of general sessions, panel presentations & roundtable discussions

The 2024 Dealership Minds Summit, held at the Marriott Hotel & Conference Center in Madison, Wis., on August 6-7, drew a crowd of 219 attendees — including 88 first-timers — from 45 different dealerships across the U.S. and Canada.

Centered on the theme “Planning & Executing Transitional Management,” the program featured 2-days of dealer-to-dealer roundtables sessions, panel presentations,

general sessions and intense networking opportunities.

*Farm Equipment* executive editor Kim Schmidt noted during opening remarks that attendees would head home with actionable ideas to help with the transition of the next set of dealership leaders that are coming up through the ranks, and based on feedback she received from those in attendance, the Dealership Minds Summit delivered. “Beyond just the informative sessions, one of the aspects of the Sum-





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mit that always stands out for attendees are the roundtable discussions and networking opportunities. And from what I heard from dealers in attendance, this year was no different. Whether it was in the sessions themselves or in hallway conversations, attendees went home with leadership development strategies they can implement back at the dealership right away. This is always two of my favorite days of the year and I was very pleased to see, and be part of, many thought provoking and idea-sharing conversations over the last two days," says Schmidt.

Among the highlights of the 2024 Dealership Minds Summit were an energizing and stage-setting kick-off presentation by Titan Machinery CEO, B.J. Knutson; the "fan-favorite" Dealership of the Year Alumni panel that fea-

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tured a candid conversation about the successes and lessons that have propelled these dealer groups to industry-best status; and the 2nd annual Mark Kreps & Steve Connelly Memorial Lecture, led by Butler Machinery Executive Director — Regional Operations, Dusty Schulz, who shared strategies on how to advance your team with internal development programs.

As CEO of the over 90-store Case IH ag and construction dealer, Knutson was impressed with this year's event and theme, and encourages all farm equipment dealerships to join in future years.

"This conference is outstanding but it gets exponentially better with the more dealers we can get here," he says. "The networking in the roundtables and halls is so powerful and

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you can really learn from the best of the best brains in the business here.”

Also announced in Madison were the dates and location of the 11th Annual Dealership Minds Summit, that will be held July 29-30, 2025, in Iowa City, Iowa.

From the single-location independent retailer to the multi-store farm equipment dealer, intense knowledge sharing and networking were in abundance throughout the 2024 Dealership Minds Summit.

The 2024 Dealership Minds Summit was made possible with the support of these title sponsors: AgDirect, Machinery Scope, Iron Solutions by Fusable, DIS, AXON Tire, TractorHouse, VitalEdge Technologies, Basic Software, Associated Equipment Distributors, AgGuard, Geringhoff, PTx Trimble, Agri Spray Drones, LST Group and Ag Technology Solutions Group. **FE**



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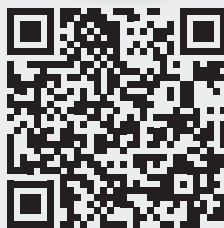
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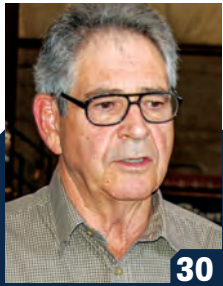
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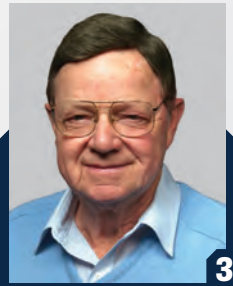




**HOWARD  
MARTIN**

# *FARM EQUIPMENT* **SHORTLINE LEGENDS**

— *Hall of Fame* —



**RICHARD  
UNVERFERTH**



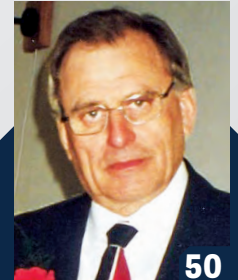
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## **2ND ANNUAL SHORTLINE LEGENDS HALL OF FAME**

The 2nd class of *Farm Equipment*'s 'Shortline Legends'  
forever changed the tools for North American farmers

*A Farm Equipment Staff Report*

**T**he 2nd annual class of Shortline Legends Hall of Fame inductees has been announced by *Farm Equipment*. And is equally impressive as the 5 recipients inducted in the industry's first class in September 2023.

The program was initiated by *Farm Equipment* editors to properly record — for posterity — the individuals whose innovations most impacted the ag machinery and dealer distribution industry in North America over the last 55 years. It honors the innovators and inventions of the independent ag equipment manufacturer.

This year's *Farm Equipment*'s Shortline Legend Hall of Fame recipients are ... In order of appearance

Howard Martin, p. 30

Richard Unverferth p. 34

Al Myers, p. 40

Cyril & Louis Keller, p.46

Wilf Degelman, p. 50

This program, along with other *Farm Equipment* award programs (Dealership of the Year, Most Valuable Precision Dealer, etc.), accomplishes three important goals. First is to point out the benchmark-worthy operations from which the entire industry can learn. Second is to remind all, and especially the newcomers, of what is possible in a mature industry, despite the often daunting challenges. And third, to remember the shoulders on whom we all stand today.

This class will be recognized during the 2024 Farm Equipment Manufacturers Assn. (FEMA) and Equipment Marketing Distribution Assn. (EMDA) Joint Convention Oct. 22-24, in Dallas, Texas.

If you would like to nominate a deserving shortline equipment pioneer that made a lasting and game-changing impact on the North American ag equipment industry, visit [FarmEquipment.com/HOFNominate](https://FarmEquipment.com/HOFNominate). **FE**



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# HOWARD MARTIN

Martin Industries, Elkton, Ky.

By Frank Lessiter, Editor, No-Till Farmer

*Editor's Note: Credited with inventing the first mechanical no-till row cleaner, Howard Martin left a wide swath of planter innovations throughout his career. Passing away in FEBRUARY 2024 at the age of 79, I'm confident Howard knew the lasting impact he'd made on no-till planting technology for generations to come.*

It's likely more no-till planting innovations and evolutions have come out of western Kentucky than any other area in North America. Leading the way in pushing planter technology forward was Howard Martin, a farmer and later, innovator, inventor and shortline manufacturer from Elkton, Ky., who passed away in early 2024.

**Tackling Major Planting Concerns.** When a farming friend bought an Allis-Chalmers planter in the 1970s, Martin rented the rig to no-till soybeans. After that successful experience, he mounted a toolbar on the front of his John Deere planter and attached wavy coulters.

Most planters in the 1970s had a depth-gauging wheel trailed behind the coulter and disc opener, leaving little loose soil in the row to cover the seed. To overcome these concerns, Martin added a depth tire with a large center rib (similar to the Allis-Chalmers unit) for needed seed-to-soil contact.

Yet after trying no-till in the early 1970s, Martin abandoned it due to concerns with the family farm's hardpan compaction conditions and thick residue mixed in the soil, which led to excessive moisture and extremely poor stands.

A decade later, Martin returned in a big way to no-till, inspired by an Iowa State Univ. study showing a distinct correlation between the amount of crop residue and soil temperatures. He was convinced that pushing residue out of the row area would help the soil dry faster, raise the soil temperature and improve corn and soybean stands.

In the early 1980s, Martin was experimenting with a pair of rotary hoe wheels mounted on the front of a wheelbarrow to move residue away from the row area without disturbing the soil. This on-farm experiment eventually led to development of the first ground-driven rotary row cleaner that was patented by Martin in 1988. It allowed soils to dry out more rapidly and warm up faster, leading to improved stands and additional ideal planting days.

Three years later, Martin Industries began manufacturing and selling row cleaners from his 30- by-36-foot on-farm shop.

**Perfect Timing.** A card table display featuring one of the first Martin-produced row cleaners at the 1991 National Farm

Machinery Show in Louisville gave a hint as to what was ahead. As farmers wrote checks on the spot for the row cleaners, Martin had to quickly figure out how to manufacture and deliver the product before spring rolled around.

"The timing could not have been better," says Steve Martin, Howard's son and Martin Industries president. "Changing government policies meant highly erodible farmland could no longer be tilled and still qualify for state and federal programs.

"Had Dad come out with the row cleaner 10 years earlier, the market wouldn't have existed. Once the government started talking about taking away subsidies if no-till wasn't practiced, things fell into place."

## Finding Partners.

The pieces started to come together when neighboring farmer and inventor Eugene Keeton asked Martin to test

his newly-developed seed firmer. Other partners also soon drove the company's designs, and in some cases changed them from something that kind of worked to something that worked very well, says Steve.

The row cleaners, Keeton seed firmer, reduced inner diameter gauge wheels, spading closing wheels and drag chains soon after were packaged together into what became the Martin-Till Planting System.

Introduced in 1995, another Martin innovation that changed the way crops are planted was the first spiked closing wheel with a rear rubber finishing wheel. The spikes helped eliminate

## Howard Martin's row cleaners opened the door for farmers who wanted to no-till...

**Howard D. Martin**  
(1944-2024)

**Martin Industries**  
(Martin-Till), Elkton, Ky.

**Founded:** 1991

**Claim to Fame:** No-Till Living Legend, No-Till Innovator credited with inventing the first mechanical no-till row cleaner.





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- Easily mounts to most Double V style OEM closing wheel brackets.



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## Paying Tribute to Howard Martin

Howard started no-tilling to earn a decent living from poor-quality land and later developed specialized no-till equipment that led to the formation of Martin Industries. His development of row cleaners, fertilizer openers, closing wheels, gauge wheels and other row-unit attachments has come from a humble one-person farm shop beginning to a highly successful manufacturing company that's a leader in the planter and drill accessory market.

I met Howard at the first Milan, Tenn., No-Till Field Day in 1981. Among the first supporters and exhibitors, he was truly an innovator, inventor and leader in no-till and conservation of our soil resources based on his own field-tested experiences.

For over 30 years, he towed his tractor and 4-row no-till/conservation till John Deere planter with the newest no-till attachments from Elkton, Ky., to the Milan field day. He also gave us the idea to set up a no-till planter demonstrations "in the field under real no-till conditions" to compare planters, attachments and drills.

It's been rewarding to watch his company grow from a small farm shop business to a nationally known product line distributed through many dealers. He was always accessible to dealers and farmers that called for advice and help.

He loved God, his family and our God-given soil resources. He was a wonderful friend and will never be forgotten as a Christian and agricultural innovator.

— **John Bradley, no-till innovator & retired director of the Univ. of Tennessee, Milan Experiment Station, Milan, Tenn.**

Howard was one of the most down to earth and humble people you could ever meet. My first encounter with Howard was on the phone in 1993, discussing a problem I had with a frustrated customer over an existing row cleaner that wasn't working. Howard sent me a couple Martin row cleaners to try and guaranteed they would work. And if they didn't, he told me to send them back and refund the cost, as he wanted to make sure my customer was happy.

Based on that conversation, I knew Howard was genuine about his invention that he knew would work in many

scenarios and situations. I became a dealer for Martin in 1993 and we have helped equip thousands of planters all over the U.S., Canada and as far away as New Zealand.

The explanation Howard offered on why his row cleaner worked best, from the diameter of the row cleaner wheel, the tooth spacing on the row cleaner wheel, to how many times his row cleaner wheel had gave me the confidence to sell his products for over 30 years.

I look back on the legacy Howard built through all his years. This includes row cleaner innovations, row cleaner improvements from the first pin-adjust row cleaners to floating row cleaners with depth bands to better follow the contour of the soil surface in different conditions and now being able to adjust row cleaners from the tractor cab. I loved having him bounce different ideas with me over the years while trying to improve his products.

— **David Moeller, Moeller Ag Services, Keota, Iowa**

Shortly after starting Needham Ag Technologies, Howard asked me to work for Martin Industries as a consultant. This led to working with him on many row cleaner, closing wheel, fertilizer opener and disc opener projects. It was a privilege to work with Howard while testing many planter attachments under different soil and moisture conditions and comparing them to other brands.

Howard recognized early on that a device which parted the previous crop residue and lightly scratched the seed zone would accelerate soil warming and dramatically improved emergence uniformity. The system improved closing the seed slot, which was a challenge on Howard's poorly-drained soils.

It was a great privilege to work with Howard and to share his enthusiasm and dedication to promote no-till practices and cover crops, plus innovate, patent and market planter attachments. His passion for making long-term no-till successful in challenging soils helped my clients adopt no-till and cover crops over a wide geography.

— **Phil Needham, Needham Ag Technologies, Calhoun, Ky.**



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sidewall compaction concerns around the seed while covering the seed trench with loose soil.

**Tough Times.** Unfortunately, his early-day innovating came during the early 1980s, a time that proved tough on many U.S. farm families. To survive, the family dropped their crop acreage from 2,000 down to 900 acres, sold most of their machinery and family members took off-farm jobs. Steve worked as a mechanic at Roeder Implement in Hopkinsville, Ky., while brother John worked at a local factory.

Howard's wife, Linda, started a lawn care company with local factories, cemeteries and churches as clients. Soon after, her husband became her "Weed Eater" operator in an effort to keep groceries on the table.

Once Keeton sold his planter finger pickup design to John Deere, he connected Martin with Deere reps who bought





**Despite Martin's successful row cleaner idea, son Steve says his dad was never a manufacturing guy; just a farmer with an inventive mind who wanted to find a good solution to tough planting problems.**

Martin's design and promised a royalty on each sale. The Martins planned to keep farming while waiting for the royalty checks to arrive.

But the ag depression of the early 1980s wasn't a good financial time for Deere and the row cleaner project was soon shelved. In need of those promised royalties dollars, Martin pleaded with Deere to find another row cleaner manufacturer, and the planter attachment planter innovation was soon licensed to Yetter.

A few years later when Martin grew concerned that manufacturing changes made to his row cleaner creation didn't have enough heft to hold up in the field, he decided to build his own. With no cash to outsource the tooling work in 1991, Martin turned to son Steve, a self-taught mechanical prodigy, who figured out how to fabricate the units.

"Had we understood what we were getting into, we would've had no business trying this," Steve says. "We had no experience in manufacturing. We were too dumb to do it, but we made it work."

"God lined everything up just right for us, and it was nothing short of a miracle. As did the publicity Dad soon got for being a farmer, inventor and manufacturer carried us, along with word-of-mouth conversations."

**'Dad Did it His Way'** Steve recalls times when he wasn't all that happy with his dad. "He'd be writing orders and sending them out with a 'NC' on the bottom of the page. 'No charge, Dad?,' I asked. 'Why are you giving these parts away?'"

"He repeatedly said, 'I don't want anybody to buy my parts and then go to the coffee shop and complain. We're going to warranty them — sometimes even if they are out of warranty.'"

"He was always committed to making it right, even if it meant me driving all night to deliver several row cleaners to a grower in western Iowa," adds Steve. "When we exhausted all of our resources and a customer still wasn't happy, Dad would write a refund check. That was hard for me to understand when we were struggling financially, but it built our name."

**Always Thanking Others.** When talking about the success of the family business, Martin would find anybody else to brag about rather than himself. "There's no end to how much you can accomplish if you don't mind who gets the credit," he often said.

"I always bragged on Eugene Keeton for being an encouragement and no-till pioneer Harry Young for being an inspiration and creating quite a stir with his pioneering no-till efforts during the 1960s

## Hall of Fame Digital Extras

- Videos
  - Howard Martin Recounts Creation of Martin Industries
  - Howard Martin's Early Days in Ag
  - Conversations with Ag Equipment's Entrepreneurs: Martin Industries
- Letters from industry for his nomination
- Martin Timeline
- NTF obituary
- How We Did It Docuseries: Martin Industries
- [Podcast] Conversations with Ag Equipment's Entrepreneurs: Martin Industries' Steve Martin

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and 1970s. I was fortunate to live just one county east of where no-till got its start and attended several of the Young no-till field days," he said in a previous interview.

Martin Industries has continued to evolve from its 1,080-square-foot farm shop beginnings and today is housed in a 50,000-square-foot modern manufacturing plant and office.

The Martin family takes a great deal of satisfaction from having played an important part in the no-till movement, finding new ways to help farmers operate their planters and drills more effectively and prevent costly soil erosion.

"Thanks to Dad, we're proud of our heritage in the evolution of no-till, planter attachments and we hope to be here for many more years," Steve concludes. **FE**



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# RICHARD UNVERFERTH

Unverferth Manufacturing, Kalida, Ohio

By Kim Schmidt, Executive Editor

**R**ichard Unverferth's entry into the ag equipment manufacturing space started like many of his contemporaries — finding a solution to a problem on the family farm. In 1935, Richard, his father Lawrence G. Unverferth and other family members refined and tested a mechanical sugar beet-thinning tool they called the Beet Blocker and received a patent later that same year.

While the Beet Blocker was the first product the family created together, it wasn't what ultimately set Richard's mark on the industry. The pair opened L.G. Unverferth Manufacturing in 1948 with a loan from family members cashing in their war bonds.

A deep thinker, you can rest assured that all the decisions Unverferth made were well thought out and analyzed.

"He would run things through his mind a lot, check it out. He'd always say, 'Well, think about it, and then let it go away for a little while, and then get back and think about it some more,'" says son Steve Unverferth. "He was what I call a deep thinker. And he was very good at analyzing, whether it was products or whether an acquisition or investment in a piece of equipment. It was always well-thought-out. Once in a while we might've waited a little too long, but there's a lesson there too."

He had passion for the business and it quickly became more than just a job. "Business was not only his vocation, it was his avocation. He loved being a business entrepreneur or manufacturer," Steve says.

**The Early Years.** The first product the new manufacturing company produced were combine shucker control levers. They saw a need to help local farmers become more efficient, so they began manufacturing innovative combine shucker door control levers for Massey-Harris combines. After manufacturing enough to fill the trunk of a car on the family farmstead just south of Kalida, Richard set off across the Midwest selling them. The Unverferths would then use the money they made from these sales to secure raw materials for the next truckload of products, and then would hit the road and do it all over again.

**Making a Mark.** Unverferth would make its mark on the industry in 1949. Seeing a need to increase flotation in wet field conditions and make better use of available tractor horsepower,

the Unverferths developed the first bolt-on dual tractor wheels, using a cast "hat-style" extension to attach the dual wheels to the drive wheel weight holes.

"What he realized is if you took a tractor and put duals on it, you could actually pull more and it was a smart way to go," says Titan International's Morry Taylor. "Most tractors back then didn't have long axles. They were stub axles — whether MF, Ford, JD or Case, IH. He worked on a kit making duals. So you could

buy the rods and roll a piece of steel. Categorized every bit of it and went all around the country.

"The big boys (Deere, IH, Case, A-C, Ford, MF) were only interested in selling tractors — they weren't interested in adding duals. There was never a big push from them. So he did that and when an area would grow, they'd look at producing and warehousing to store truckloads. And then manufacturing all those parts to sell a kit."

In addition to dual extensions, the company began manufacturing dual wheels, all from the family's farm. These products established the company in the agricultural wheel business, which continues today. In those early years, the family's farm income contributed to keeping the young company going.

The success of the duals didn't come without challenges — mainly from the major OEMs. "The majors always tried to void their warranties if dual wheels were added," says Steve. "Well,

***He was driven to make the world a better place. He always wanted to make sure farmers were offered the latest and greatest equipment to help them be more efficient in their farming practices. That was a big part of his motivation...***

**Richard Unverferth**  
(1923-2004)

Unverferth Mfg,  
Kalida, Ohio

1923-2004

Company  
Founded: 1948

Position: Founder

**Claim to Fame:** Developed the first bolt-on dual tractor wheels. He was a deep thinker who was sure to analyze all product and acquisition decisions.



## Hall of Fame Digital Extras

- [Video] 75 Years of Unverferth Manufacturing
  - Richard Unverferth photo gallery
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# CONGRATULATIONS TO RICHARD UNVERFERTH ON BEING INDUCTED INTO THE SHORTLINE HALL OF FAME



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In 1949, Richard Unverferth and his father, L.G. Unverferth, introduced stovepipe hat-shaped wheel extensions for adding dual wheels to tractors. By the 1950s, the company began manufacturing dual wheels, while still operating from the family's farm. These products firmly established Unverferth in the agricultural wheel business.

eventually the majors decided that we were right and dual wheels were a good thing."

**An Expanding Business.** In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Unverferth began to expand, and entering the grain handling business and later the tillage business was a turning point, says Larry Unverferth, Richard's son and current president of the company.

In 1972, Unverferth added gravity boxes and box augers to its product mix through the acquisition of McCurdy Manufacturing in Ada, Ohio. Throughout Unverferth's history, its growth has always been strategic.

"That was one of Dad's strong points. He always said that you don't grow for the sake of growth, you grow for the sake of strategic things happening," Steve says. "We turned down a lot of acquisitions and product designs because of his foresight, and knowing what was best for the business, what was best for farmers."

Of course, there were mistakes along the way, Steve says. "Once in a while you stub your toe. We did make a year and a half to two foray into a particular business that we bought that just didn't work," he says.

Steve says his father recognized it wasn't working and the company backed out. "We were competing against some really big boys and as a small manufacturer we couldn't get the efficiencies of purchasing to compete ... For every success there was maybe one



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or two that weren't quite as successful."

But, a lesson was always learned from those missteps, adds Larry. "Dad always said, 'You always learn something from those processes,'" he recalls. "Whether it's a manufacturing process, engineering process or marketing. He was very big into — and we still are today — listening to what the customer needs, not us telling the customer what they need."

In this particular instance, Larry and Steve say Richard gathered everyone —

from engineers to shop employees — to explain why the decision was made.

"The marketplace got fairly depressed at that point, but he made sure our folks understood that they didn't do all this work in vain," Larry says. "Again, it's all about learning, and we learned new ways of engineering things, whether it's hydraulics or power driven. From a marketing standpoint, we learned from almost every aspect of that business which helped us going forward."

**Lasting Lessons.** Like all parents, Richard taught his children the importance of working hard and working smart. But perhaps the biggest lesson his sons learned in working with their father came from the way he conducted himself. Steve says his father always managed a calm demeanor when faced with a "crisis situation."

"He would always tell us, 'Be the cool head in the crowd of people that are dealing with an issue,'" recalls Steve. "And he was always able to do that. I seldom saw him get angry. The biggest lesson he taught me was to be the calm in the storm because you can think a whole lot better, maybe a whole lot smarter than others if you keep a calm head."

Steve recalls a time when he was about high school aged when Unverferth was a growing company. A customer, who accounted for a very large percentage of the business, decided they wanted to do some of the manufacturing themselves, removing Unverferth from the equation. "He talked them down and out of that and the importance of us maintaining manufacturing of all our products vs. them becoming our competitor," he says. "It was a rough time for



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## Passion for Ag & Specialty Equipment Business

Richard Unverferth was an active member of the Farm Equipment Manufacturers Assn. (FEMA), serving on the board for 12 years and president from 1987-88. His son Steve Unverferth says Richard was always looking to do whatever was best for the ag industry and small businesses. "They aren't necessarily small businesses, but compared to John Deere or Case, aftermarket people were small business," he says. "He was devoted to the smaller side of agriculture and promoting the products, manufacturing them and doing what was good for the farmer."

"Dick was a very good and respected man who I never heard a bad word said about him," says Tom Burenga, Worksaver founder who also closely served on the Farm Equipment Manufacturers Assn. (FEMA) executive board with Unverferth. "He did an exceptional job leading and guiding the association through his presidency of FEMA."



## Remembering Richard Unverferth, a Supplier's Perspective

While I never had the pleasure of meeting Richard or LG, the success of the company they built speaks volumes about their exceptional business leadership and vision. Their legacy continues to inspire the work ethic of their employees and family members today.

As a supplier to Unverferth for 20+ years, Agrisolutions has had the unique advantage point of witnessing their evolution firsthand. They have excelled "better than most" because of their customer-focused innovation, technical expertise, efficient supply chain management, collaborative culture and strategic market expansion. These business practices have enabled them to consistently exceed industry standards and become a leading agricultural manufacturer.

Speaking strictly from a supplier's perspective, Unverferth treats suppliers as a partner, not just a vendor. They always have a willingness to communicate and collaborate. They maintain a high standard of supplier performance, with clear expectations. Suppliers who consistently meet these standards are rewarded with strong, long-term partnerships. Agrisolutions is grateful to be among the companies fortunate to enjoy such a partnership.

One of my fondest memories with Unverferth was traveling with members of their purchasing and engineering teams to our manufacturing facility in Spain. We spent time visiting our factory in Legazpi and sightseeing in the beautiful historic city of San Sebastian. It was a memorable trip for all of us.

Unverferth's ultimate success stems from their passion for agriculture and commitment to people. They are an amazing customer and Agrisolutions takes immense pride in supporting Unverferth's success by providing them with high-quality agricultural parts from our global facilities.

— Julie Chamberland,  
Business Development Manager,  
Agrisolutions

him and for them. They finally got it worked out and they remained lifelong friends."

Having a cool head and thinking things through helped save nearly 50% of Unverferth's business in this instance.

Steve recalls his dad was there to guide them and correct their course when needed but gave him and his brothers the freedom to think things through on their own. "It wasn't easy, but it was the best thing for me that ever happened," he says.

"He allowed that to happen," Larry

adds. "Like Steve said, he was there in the background saying, 'Now, hey, did you think about this?' Or 'I don't think I would approach it like that.' It helped us all immensely."

**Unverferth Today.** Now under the leadership of Larry, the business has grown to include 12 different product categories and celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2023. Since getting its start in 1948, the company has acquired over 11 brands and currently markets 7 different brands. **FE**

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# AL MYERS

Ag Leader, Ames, Iowa

*By Noah Newman, Technology Editor*

**T**he 1992 release of Yield Monitor 2000 — the first commercially successful on-the-go yield monitor — was a historic moment in the emerging world of precision agriculture. It was the brainchild of Al Myers, Ag Leader founder and president, who never imagined the company would become what it is today when he spent years tinkering with the prototype in his basement.

"I was just plain dumb lucky," Myers said during an interview with Mike Lessiter for *Farm Equipment's* How We Did It podcast. "In 1992, I did not recognize how big precision farming would be, or the advancements that were coming."

Based in Ames, Iowa, Ag Leader is now the largest privately-owned supplier of precision farming technology in the world, with nearly 400 employees, offices in The Netherlands, Australia and Brazil, and an expansive dealer network.

Myers' background in agriculture and engineering uniquely positioned him to recognize the untapped potential of technology in crop production. A tenacity to continually raise the bar in product development and a talent for hiring like-minded employees eventually catapulted the company to new heights in the precision ag landscape.

**Origin Story.** Myers grew up in Watseka, Ill., about 90 miles south of Chicago. He worked on his father's diversified crop and livestock farm and was mechanically inclined. This caught the eye of his vocational agriculture teacher, who then suggested a career path in engineering. A senior trip to the University of Illinois provided a spark.

"I was fascinated with the things I saw there, walking through the different engineering departments, so I enrolled in engineering and never looked back," Myers says. "I got my Bachelor of Science degree in 1970 and later a Master of Science in Agricultural Engineering."

Myers hoped for a job with John Deere or Caterpillar, both headquartered close to his hometown, but the economy had other plans. The year he graduated, there was a recession in the off-road machinery market, and those dream job offers never came.

"I ended up working at Sundstrand Corp. in Rockford, Ill.," Myers says. "They focused primarily on aerospace, but I worked in a division that was trying to develop some high-pressure hydraulics. It merged into the hydro-transmission plant in Ames, Iowa, now called Danfoss."

Myers worked in Rockford for less than a year before transferring to Ames. The economic problems soon expanded to other industries and eventually nudged him down a different path.

"Once 1981 hit and the big slide started, sales of their products were down 6 years in a row, which led to research and development cuts," Myers says. "I like to develop new products and wasn't happy with my job, but had a young family then, so I couldn't do something different."

"Going out on my own was a big step," Myers recalls. "I'd never

been laid off like many people who I knew in those recession years. I had a secure job with a good salary and benefits, so it was like stepping off a cliff. I had young children when I started the company: one was 13 years old, and the other was 11. My wife didn't say so, but kind of wondered, 'Is this guy crazy?' I was obsessed with being successful and finally took the big step."

Myers often dreamed of starting a company and developing products on his own. He remembers countless brainstorming sessions in his free time, one of which led to a light bulb moment in the mid-80s.

"I thought a combine yield monitor would be useful to farmers," Myers says. "My dad was still farming, and I put a crude prototype on his combine in the fall of 1986 and kept refining it."

**Early Days.** Myers spent roughly 6 years developing and testing the yield monitors, working alongside 3 field testers. It wasn't until 1992 that he was satisfied with the product, and Ag Leader was born.

"The first year the product was out, in June of 1992, I thought I could sell 30-40 units," Myers says. "I sold 10, and at least half of them were to people who I had personal connections with. With less than \$30,000 in total sales, I didn't make money that year, but it was just me, so my expenses were pretty low."

What Myers lacked in sales he made up for in business lessons, like cash flow 101.

"You have to keep cash flowing — that's the lifeblood of the business," Myers says. "It's different than with startups today because there are a bunch of them that go out and collect venture capital. When I started, venture capital was unknown in this part of the country. I wouldn't have gone after that even if it were, though, because I wanted to be in control of the company. It was very important to manage expenses

**Al Myers**  
Ag Leader, Ames, Iowa

**Age:** 76

**Company Founded:** 1992

**Position:**  
Founder & President

**Claim to Fame:** Inventor of the Yield Monitor 2000 — the first commercially successful on-the-go yield monitor





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in the beginning. I had nothing other than the money that I could spare from my full-time job, with two kids and a mortgage.”

Myers worked alone at home during the first 6 months of the company, but as winter approached, he realized the need for expansion. He rented a small office space for his employees, who at the time were mostly part-time university students. A little over a year later, Myers hired his first full-time employee.

“If you ask Al if he thought he’d have this kind of impact on precision ag when he started the company, he’d say no,” says Russ Morman, who has been with Ag Leader since 1997 and currently works in the marketing department. “If memory serves me correctly, the first yield monitor he came out with didn’t even have a GPS port on it because he thought nobody’s going to want a map.”

Retail price on the first yield monitor was \$2,250 — almost 10 times what farmers were paying at the time for any technology add-on. A moisture sensor, added the second year, increased the price to \$2,750. Farmers were slow to buy in. First-year sales were nothing to write home about, but early customers were astonished by what the new tool could accomplish.

“I know a local farmer who bought one of the first 10 monitors I sold,” Myers says. “He had one field that was having poor soybean yields and eventually figured out that he had cyst nematode moving into his soil and he wouldn’t have known that otherwise. He also found that drift from fungicide he was spraying on seed



**The Yield Monitor 2000 was introduced in 1992 and paved the way for Ag Leader’s continued success.**

corn was improving bean yields in certain areas.”

**Gaining Traction.** Myers racked up the mileage during his second selling season, visiting John Deere dealers within an 80-mile radius of Ames. Although Myers knew he had to establish a dealer network, he wasn’t quite sure how to do it until his first farm show in Peoria, Ill., after the 1992 harvest season.

“Independent manufacturers’ representatives — which I didn’t even know existed — stopped by our booth,” Myers recalls. “I started hooking up with some of those folks. They were good for me because they had the connections to the implement dealers.”

As business continued to grow in the early ’90s, a huge break



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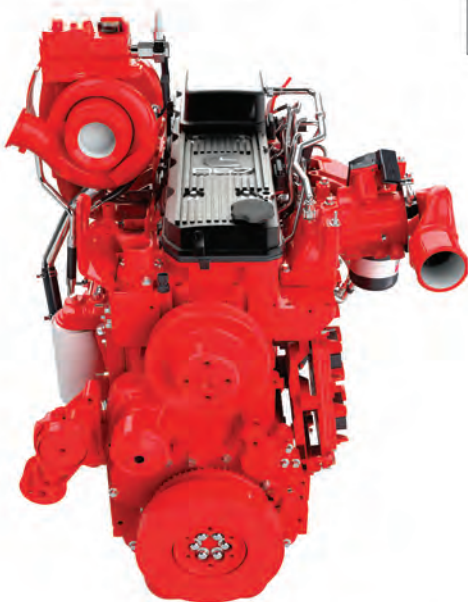
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came when Myers was contacted by Case IH in 1994. The following year, the OEM put 60 yield monitor systems in fields as part of a large test program.

"I thought we might get into the OEM business, but I wasn't expecting it that early," Myers says. "They went into production in March 1996. I think that after a full year with them, OEM sales might have been 40% of my total, but over the years, our aftermarket sales grew more than OEM sales. For a long time, we've maintained about 75% aftermarket and 25% OEM sales."

Reflecting on those early days, Myers says he had no indication of the precision farming boom that lay ahead.

"I anticipated making maps with dead reckoning and compasses," he recalls.

"Global positioning came along a couple years after I started the business and was becoming usable. As GPS made mapping practical, it became obvious that people wanted the whole system ready to just plug in and go."

"We took a single product that Al introduced to the world in 1992 and morphed it into everything that you see today in these tractors," Morman says.

"Steering systems, nozzle by nozzle sprayer control, accurate planting

systems, all this stuff came from the competition that Al brought to the industry with that first on-the-go yield monitor."

**New Era.** Myers recognized that advanced users were looking for yield maps coupled with analytics, and that meant the company would need to offer software. In 1996, Ag Leader unveiled the GPS 2000,

a stand-alone receiver and antenna system capable of basic field mapping, allowing data to be tied spatially so a yield map could be produced. As technological tools were rapidly changing the face of agriculture, not all farmers were able to adapt, Myers recalls.

"That was a real struggle in the beginning, and that's one of the reasons we developed a very strong technical support department," he says. "It was a struggle to get most farmers trained. In the beginning, practically none of those who were buying yield monitors had even touched a computer before."

Myers views 2004 as the dawn of the modern era for Ag Leader. The company introduced the InSight display and started transitioning its products to the CAN bus type of electric architecture that most farm machinery was moving toward at the time.

"That really gave us the platform for expanding into all these different functions that we have now," Myers says. "Prior to the InSight display, we did grain and cotton yield monitoring and some planter and spreader control, but that's all we could

***Back then, I could teach myself to do things and go to RadioShack to buy parts to build prototypes. The technology is so much more sophisticated now, so the barrier to entry is also much higher today...***



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do. The InSight and CAN bus architecture really opened the future for us. We were able to introduce the first reliable, easy to use, large color touchscreen display in agriculture. It was not the first color display, but it was a giant step ahead.”

It was around this time that Al’s youngest son, Mike Myers, became a key player for the Ag Leader team.

“I was at Iowa State for computer engineering and was working in the engineering department full-time in the summers,” Mike said on a recent Ag Leader podcast. “Before my senior year, Al came to me and asked if I’d mind taking a semester off from school. I didn’t really like that idea, but we were working on the InSight display, and it had to get done by the end of winter so that we could ship it on time.”

Mike put his aspirations of working for Apple or Microsoft on hold and agreed to help his dad out. He went to Iowa State part-time and worked 25-30 hours a week doing engineering for Ag Leader.

“And when I graduated from Iowa State, it seemed obvious to me that I could bring a lot of value to the company, so I basically

just stuck around after that.”

**Team Building.** Al Myers’ insatiable appetite for innovation is a quality that’s been instilled in his employees over the years.

“Al is a very humble leader,” Morman says. “He’s still involved every day with the business. He’s a very hands-on guy because he’s an engineer. Everybody in the company has the same goal — to make products that allow the grower to become more efficient. Everybody knows which direction we need to go because Al instilled that in all of us.”

“It was an advantage for me to build the engineering department,” Myers says. “I knew the mechanical engineering end of things and did my own electronics and programming in the beginning, but I needed to bring in people who had strong expertise in that. I also built a very strong management staff, and with our capable engineering department, we can produce products of OEM or better quality.”

Mike Myers, currently the vice president of engineering and finance, is set to follow in his dad’s footsteps and continue the

## Hall of Fame Digital Extras

- [Podcast] Conversations with Ag Equipment’s Entrepreneurs: Ag Leader’s Al Myers
- [Video] Al Myers — Precision Farming Pioneer

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tradition of innovation at Ag Leader.

Many of Ag Leader’s new employees are fresh out of school, and, in most cases, come from a farming background. Al Myers challenges his team to find direction — literally — from the field to stay ahead of the curve.

“I have a whole department of product managers and specialists doing market research by going out and riding with farmers, talking with them and walking in their fields,” Myers says. “Our challenge is to keep our existing product lines viable by introducing enhancements. We also put every penny we can into research and development. You have to put the R&D effort into new products to stay ahead of the game. We are always trying to figure out the next thing that the farmer is going to need and want out of technology.” **FE**

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# CYRIL & LOUIS KELLER

Keller Mfg. & Welding, Rothsay, Minn.

*By Dave Kanicki, Contributing Writer*

**T**he tough farming conditions in the Red River Valley of western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota has spawned many of the most significant advancements in farm machinery over the past century. According to David Meyer, co-founder and chairman of the Titan Machinery equipment dealership group based in Fargo, N.D., the most important innovations originating from the region include 4WD equipment, the air seeder, tracks on tractors, combines and the skid steer.

Of those on Meyer's shortlist, skid steers have proven to be the most versatile with wide ranging applications. The skid steer was the brainchild of brothers Cyril and Louis Keller and was originally developed to clean poultry barns. Ensuing decades demonstrated that its applications have exploded far beyond its original purpose. From agriculture to construction to landscaping and snow removal to warehousing and foundries, today's skid steer is used in a myriad of applications and industries. Some say it launched the compact equipment industry.

Often referred to today by its brand name as the "Bobcat," the original machine that evolved into the Bobcat was called the Keller Self-Propelled Loader (U.S. Patent No. 3,151,503).

**They Wanted to Be Farmers.** The Keller brothers grew up near Tintah, Minn., helping their father and grandfather on the farm as well as repairing and fabricating equipment in their grandfather's shop. Their formal education extended only through the eighth grade. At the start of World War II, Cyril enlisted in the Navy and Louis was drafted into the Army.

At the end of the war the brothers returned to Minnesota. While they would have liked to continue farming, "It was too expensive to start," says Louis's son Joe Keller. So, Louis went to work at a foundry in Fergus Falls, Minn., and Cyril began working for an implement dealership in Elbow Lake, Minn.

Recognizing his mechanical talents, one of the foundry owners encouraged Louis to start his own business and suggested that he set up shop in Rothsay, Minn. "In 1947, Louis rented a small building for a shop, moved his family to Rothsay and started Keller Welding & Mfg.," says Joe.

He goes on to explain, "In addition to repairing and fabricating items for area farmers, Louis also would design and build his own products." For example, after watching a demonstration of a snowplow, Louis decided he had a better idea. During the winter of 1948 he designed and manufactured a snowblower that could be attached to the front of a tractor, which proved highly successful. He followed this up with a walk behind snowblower in 1949.

The Farmhand Co. was licensed to build the tractor size snowblowers, but Louis kept the right to build the walk-behind blowers. "The snowblower was Louis's first major creation and his design is the same basic style still used today," says Joe.

**A Unique Challenge, A Unique Solution.** By 1953, Louis had more business than he could handle, so he asked his brother Cyril to join the business as an equal partner. It was shortly thereafter when a frequent customer approached the brothers looking for a solution to a unique problem.

Eddie Velo was a pioneer in the turkey industry, utilizing large two-story barns. At the time it was believed he had 5 farms and 10 barns. Removing manure from the barns had become a major headache for Velo because once the turkeys were shipped to market, he had only 3 days to clean out the barns and put down new bedding.

One day Eddie stopped by Keller Mfg. and shared how difficult it was finding the labor required to get the barns ready for the next flock of turkeys. He said he needed something that could operate in very tight spaces and light enough to operate on the second floor of the barns. Louis and Cyril said they would think about it, but at the time they were too busy to put any time into it.

"Shortly after things slowed down, Louis and Cyril came up with a machine concept that could potentially turn on a dime/within its own length and sketched it on a large piece of cardboard," explains Joe. Velo liked the idea and agreed to pay for the materials needed and Cyril and Louis would invest their time to build the first machine.

Joe says, "That way if it didn't work, they would all be out of their investment in this team project. If it did work, Eddie would pay for their time to build it but not development time."

It took only 6 weeks from the time of this agreement until the

**Cyril Keller (1922-2020)  
& Louis Keller (1923-2010)**

**Keller Mfg. & Welding, Rothsay, Minn.;  
Melroe Mfg. Co. and Bobcat Co.**

**Founded:** 1947

**Position:** Founders

**Claim to Fame:** Invented the skid steer, launching the compact equipment industry.

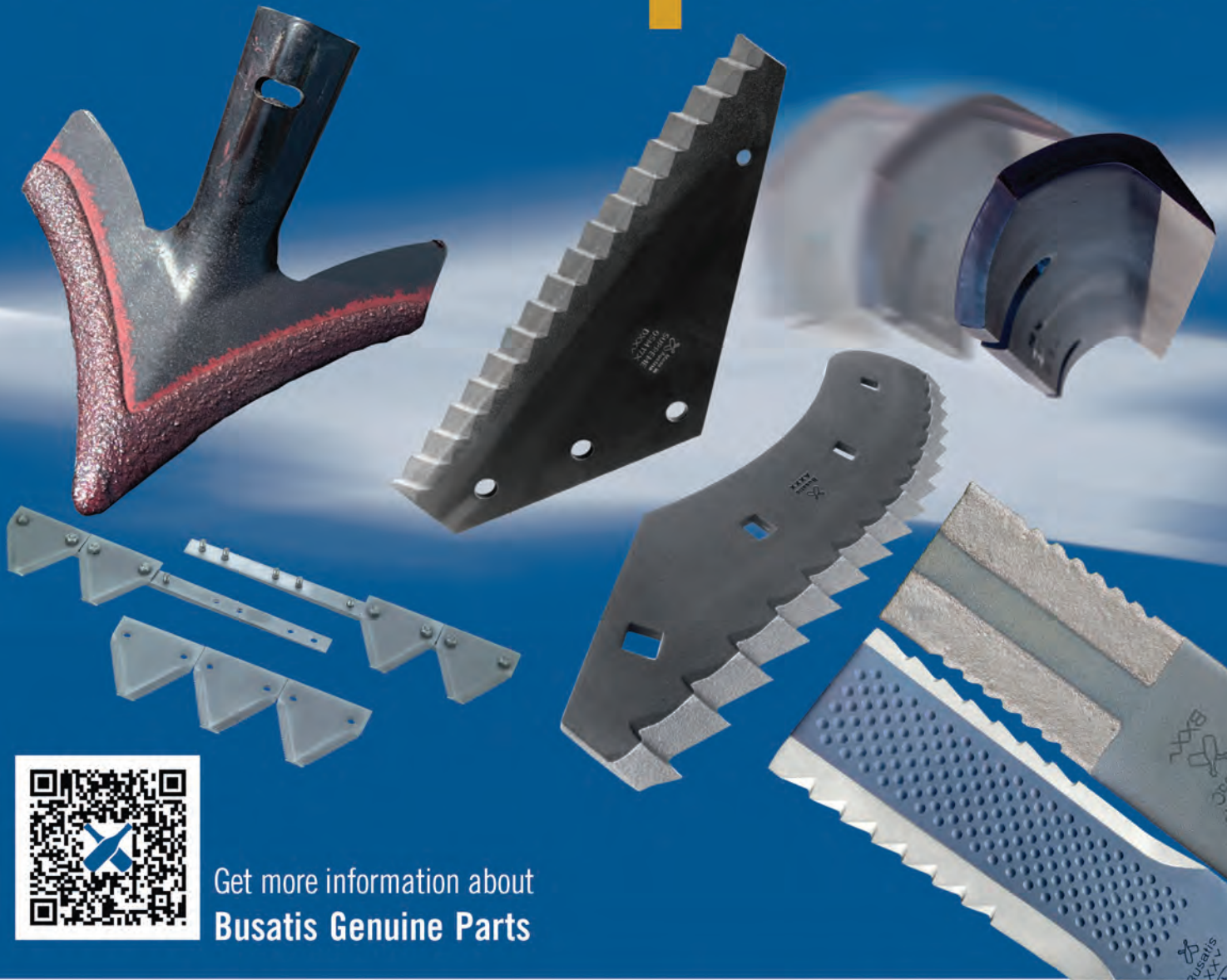




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first one was up and running. “Testing started immediately on the turkey farm, and it went well,” says Joe. “They discovered some things that needed to be made stronger and continued to make improvements.”

For example, the first units ran on three wheels, one being a caster wheel on the back that allowed the machine to turn. But it broke and needed to be made stronger. To steer, the front wheels were designed so one wheel could go forward while the other would go in reverse. They were controlled by two hand levers; it had no steering wheel and utilized a belt and chain drive system that didn’t require any shifting. The bucket was controlled by two foot pedals. The machine utilized a 6-horsepower motor.

A couple final improvements were switching out the belts, which would slip, to the patented all chain and clutch drive system. They also upgraded the manure fork tines from steel rods that would bend to heavier steel rods made from bars from the town’s old jail. They didn’t bend.

Velo was satisfied with the machine’s operation and the Kellers sent an invoice for the materials and their fabrication time to him Feb. 4, 1957, and he paid for this first machine March 7, 1957. “They didn’t imagine that the first Keller Self-Propelled Loader would be the start of today’s entire skid-steer and compact equipment industry,” says Joe.

**Meeting the Melroes.** At the time, the brothers’ uncle, Anton Christianson, owned an Allis Chalmers dealership in Elbow Lake, Minn., which sold Melroe Co.’s well known windrow pickups and harrow weeders. At this time there weren’t many farm equipment manufacturers in North Dakota and Melroe Co. was the largest. The founder of the company, E.G. Melroe had passed away in 1955. The company was then taken over by his four sons and son-in-law. One of the four Melroe brothers, Les Melroe, stopped by the dealership one day, around mid-summer of 1958, for a visit and Christianson told him his nephews had something he should look at.

By that time Louis and Cyril had built 6 more Keller Loaders. When Les Melroe stopped by for a demonstration, they still had one loader that remained unsold. Following the demo, Melroe Co. invited the brothers to display their machine at its booth during the 1958 Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul.

The high level of interest the revolutionary loader garnered during the event led Melroe Co. to offer the brothers an employment opportunity. Louis and Cyril would become Melroe Co. employees and work at the firm’s Gwinner, N.D., facility, to be part of a team to improve on the design of their Keller Loader. Melroe Mfg. was already a successful company producing E.G. Melroe’s well known windrow pickups and harrow weeders.

Joe says Cyril then took one of the six and hit the road to sell it. “Cyril never came back,” so to speak. He finished the rest of his career working along with the Melroe sales team selling, setting up dealers and training salespeople how to run a Bobcat. In an interview prior to his death, Cyril said, “The hardest thing about the early sales was that it had no steering wheel. It was the hardest thing for them to learn. We had to take the time to show them that each hand lever did one thing and each foot pedal did one thing. You could run the bucket, stop, reverse and brake—all with the hand levers and foot pedals.”



**Louis Keller operates the first M440 prototype, which featured a more robust design and was the first to have closed drive compartments and double-acting hydraulic lift cylinders.**

Meanwhile Louis and the Melroe team continued designing new models and making changes, many of which were based on customer input he received through Cyril and the entire Melroe sales force.

In 1961, after slow sales and much investment from Melroe Mfg., a M200 three-wheeled model was modified to create the first 4WD skid steer loader and was dubbed the M400.

With more significant investment from Melroe Co., by 1962, Louis and Cyril along with the Melroe team lead by Cliff Melroe developed an improved 4WD model. This improved model was dubbed M440 and replaced M400 unit. “In addition to a more robust design, the new model was the first to have the enclosed drive compartments and double-acting hydraulic lift cylinders,” says Joe.

“An additional significant change to the M440 was it would have the necessary 70/30 back-to-front weight distribution needed to make the skid loader turn easily,” he explains. “Without a load, the front end would skid easily and with a full load the rear would skid easily. This made the M440 the first true skid-steer loader.”

**Becoming the ‘Bobcat.’** Once the 440 was developed it opened new market opportunities and thoughts of needing a name for the product. During a meeting with Flint Advertising in Fargo the idea of Bobcat came up for a name. During that meeting it was pointed out that the bobcat animal was “tough, quick and agile.” The group decided this was a perfect description of the skid steer.

It was also decided the new Bobcat would be painted white. During the meeting it was pointed out that sales of the skid steer to the fertilizer market were growing and they saw strong potential for increased sales to the dairy industry. This helped to determine that the equipment would be painted white. “The group at the meeting figured the white color would help hide the fertilizer dust while demonstrating cleanliness for the dairy market.”

**A ‘Transformational Product.’** Howard Dahl, a member of the Melroe family, calls the Bobcat skid steer a “transformational product” and the “Swiss Army Knife” of machinery. Dahl knows what he’s talking about when it comes to equipment breakthroughs. His companies — Concord and Amity Technology — have developed the air seeder, sugar beet harvesting equipment and soil sampling equipment.

“Before the Bobcat, a lot of material handling around the farm consisted of a wheelbarrow and a shovel,” says Dahl. Today, he estimates there are between 300–400

## Hall of Fame Digital Extras

- Documenting the History of the Bobcat & Its Impact

[FarmEquipment.com/0924](http://FarmEquipment.com/0924)



attachments that can be used with the skid steer, making it the most versatile machine for farming, construction and dozens of other industries. It is also estimated that more skid-steer loaders are used in the construction industry than any other single piece of equipment.

Joe Keller adds that applications for the Bobcat have grown way beyond what the Keller brothers ever dreamt.

**Accolades Abound.** The inventiveness, creativity and drive to help customers led the Keller brothers' and the Melroe team to create one of the most important machines of the 20th century.

Since Cyril and Louis introduced the first Keller Self-Propelled Loader in 1957 and worked to develop the modern skid steer, literally hundreds of thousands of the machines have been manufactured and sold around the world. Today, dozens of manufacturers produce skid-steer loaders under various brand names. Nonetheless, the name "Bobcat" remains the most recognized identifier of skid steers today.

The inventiveness and wide use of this equipment has been widely acknowledged. The Assn. of Equipment Manufacturers inducted Cyril and Louis Keller into its Hall of Fame in 1999. In 2004, they were inducted into the Minnesota Inventors Hall

of Fame. This was followed by their induction into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2023.

Since 1997, Joe Keller and his sister, Marilyn Loegering, have worked diligently to preserve their father and uncle's role in Bobcat's history. "Winning the NIHF (National Inventors Hall of Fame) award last year has done much more in preserving their history. Now the *Farm Equipment* Shortline Legends award will do even more," says Joe Keller.

**Genius & Humility Combined.** Accolades aside, the human side of the Keller brothers' story

is as big a part of their legacy as was their inventive genius.

During a video interview conducted while they were still alive, Cyril commented, "God gives everyone a gift and we used ours to help people do things better. My brother and I had a good relationship. I listened to him and he listened to me. If I came up with something and Louis thought he could make it better, that's the way it went."

And looking back, Louis expressed his feeling about what they had accomplished by simply saying, "It makes you feel good when you hear about how many people are enjoying it and benefiting from it." **FE**

***It's my personal belief that these two brothers should receive the Nobel Peace Prize for this machine ... The unfathomable amount of man hours and backbreaking labor this machine has saved mankind is a true blessing to the human race the world over...***

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# WILF DEGELMAN

Degelman Industries, Regina, Sask.

*By Mike Lessiter, Editor/Publisher*

**D**espite having little formal education in design and drafting, Wilf Degelman was a confident implement innovator. To hear from his sons, contemporaries and distributors, there was one way. And it was “Wilf’s Way.”

He innovated to address his own farming problems and frustrations, like picking stone by hand all summer and being held hostage by the Western Canadian snowfalls. As many in the industry will attest, he changed how life was lived in the province.

Like most of the other Shortline Legend Hall of Famers to date, Wilf was not an engineer. And like many others, he was a rare breed of designer and inventor.

Anything he touched was going to be designed heavy — “over-built” says sons Paul and Jack — and simple. Heavy, durable and no extra parts. Simplicity and robustness ruled the day. He wasn’t interested in building a complex “Swiss watch” but rather what the farmer needed to get the job done quickly.

According to his sons, the teenage Wilf was refining his welding skills while his friends were playing hockey and baseball. Many family members kept his torch active, and he put a few dollars in his pocket from job shop work, including local implement maker Pete Anderson.

He founded his manufacturing company at age 32, and kept food on the table through sheer work ethic.

After completing the farm chores, he’d weld until midnight and then wake up at 5:30 a.m. and do it again..

**The Rock Picker.** The company can trace its roots to a frustrated Wilf toiling on his Raymore, Sask., farm in 1962. The province is said to “grow rocks” nearly as well as cash crops. Hand-picking stones in summer-fallowed fields and hurling them onto the “stone boat” was backbreaking labor.

While the first few attempts for a solution by the self-taught welder didn’t fly, Wilf continued to attack the problem, and developed one of the first modern rock pickers that didn’t require the tractor to stop.

“It was simple to operate because all you had to do was drive a certain speed, lower the grill, scoop up the rock and contain it in the bucket,” says Jack.

But he wouldn’t allow others to buy one until he could fix all known issues. After several iterations, he was satisfied enough to sell one to a neighbor in 1964. That first unit was painted green because it was the only paint Wilf found in the barn.

“It’s rare that a product comes around and changes people’s lives,” says Paul, “but that’s what his invention did.”

His late wife, Eileen, was instrumental from the beginning when she and Wilf were at a crossroads of focusing on the farm — or the manufacturing business. Despite pressures from his parents to return to farming, the unmoved Wilf sold off the cows and chickens — a great risk for a young father and husband. “He converted his red hip roof barn to a factory and eventually to 2 shifts of

workers” recalls Jack.

Because we were so far out in the country, the welders were staying at the house. Mom was the one buying the steel and other materials and preparing lunches in evenings while she and Dad were still farming. She was the protector of Wilf and even tougher than him. You’d have to go through Eileen to get to Wilf. She could say no to anyone, recalls Jack.

As word began to get out, farmers were saving their milk money to buy the Degelman rock picker. “One customer showed up and said they wouldn’t wait for it to be painted; they wanted to buy it on the spot. Dad sold the unit with a gallon of his yellow paint for them to apply at home,” recalls Paul.

Thousands of great inventions just like his disappear from an inability to get them to market. Degelman ran \$25 ads in *The Western Producer* and attended farm fairs to meet farmers, distributors and dealers. Some of the original machines are still in use 60 years later, says Paul.

By 1966, the labor demands of the business required a move to the city — Regina — to gain better access to workers.

**Dozer Blades.** The next big project was the bulldozer blade in 1969. Wilf designed a simple blade that could be manually angled with pins and safely hooked up to the tractor frame. John Deere took notice and asked for the blades in John Deere green.

Jack says Wilf tangled with Deere over volume commitments, but the shop was soon working 24/7 and shipping thousands of blades.

Business was brisk, says Jack, because the tractor fitups were always changing, with a lot of development time required from R&D. Wilf’s first blades cost about \$2,500, while some retail today for \$100,000.

Like the rock picker a decade earlier, the dozer blades flourished out of necessity. “Our roads in 1969 weren’t developed like they are today; some were more like dirt trails,” says Paul. “When snow came, farmers still had to feed their cattle and get grain unloaded, the kids to school and to town to buy groceries. Getting the roads opened was a life-changer for many.”

**Wilf Degelman**  
Degelman Industries,  
Regina, Sask.

**Age:** 94

**Founded:** 1965

**Position:** President

**Claim to Fame:**

Introduced a new era of stone pickers, dozer blades, landrollers and heavy harrows. Led with an agility to roll with the changes unsteady of getting caught up in the land or the irrelevant.



# CONGRATULATIONS WILF,

**FARM EQUIPMENT  
SHORTLINE  
LEGENDS**

on this well-deserved recognition and induction into the SLHF! Our families have shared a strong and enduring business relationship for nearly 50 years, and as second-generation leaders, we're proud to continue this tradition of collaboration and mutual success.

Warm regards,  
The Guertin Family and Superior Finishes Inc.





## Family Affair: The Degelman 5

Over the years, Degelman Industries was a family affair, with all Wilf and Eileen's kids playing a role at some point, in either manufacturing, sales and marketing, research and development, purchasing, administration and human resources. There was no doubt who was in charge, though Paul and Jack say Wilf couldn't tell you what the term "CEO" actually meant.

"Dad was the designer and looked after R&D," says Jack, noting that Wilf also moonlighted by operating a farm he'd acquired in 1973. "All the day-to-day stuff was handled by the four of us, Roland, Scott, Paul and me."

Like many family businesses, there was no formal structure nor a playbook for the Degelman's to follow. In time, the brothers took on more and more responsibility, which gave Wilf some freedom from the office and allowed him to focus on his

passion of farming.

But it wasn't all sunshine and balloons. Wilf was known for his stubbornness and each family member had to "slug it out" with the old man.

Interestingly, the Degelman 5 leveraged their own leadership styles, though no one would call it a "textbook" org chart.

While Wilf held the president title, Paul says the brothers also ran the company like they were in charge. "When any of us were on the road, we'd speak like we were president. We took a lot of liberties. Sometimes, it was awkward or got us in trouble, but maybe it also drove our success."

As Wilf, Scott and Roland began to enjoy retirement, Paul and Jack followed what had worked, in a "What Would Wilf Do?" kind of approach.

**Design Principles.** To farmers, a few things stand out in Wilf's designs. It was always straightforward and simple, with the fewest number of parts. If something came his way that was unnecessarily complex, he was known to say, "That design is too 'Swiss-watch' for me." He didn't want anything breaking down," says Paul, noting that near-constant repair was common in a lot of farm equipment.

His innovations had less to do with a drafting table than his personal observations. His ingenuity and innovation came from watching his neighbors and considering how he could help them. Most of his designs originated from the seat of his tractor.

He was also lightning-fast in getting his designs to prototype stage. He'd rush the prototypes to get them out in the field to learn.

"It would often take 4 iterations to get them into production, but he could see when he was onto something," says Paul. "Today's software and technology tools make beautiful prototypes, but it's more methodical today. Dad and his team were fast, and more often than not, his ideas were chalk drawings on the shop floor."

Wilf always insisted on durability. "He wanted the look of the machine to be synonymous with strength. The rule was: 'Whenever in doubt, add metal.'"

**Leadership Legacy.** When asked about their dad's leadership style, the answer was simple: "he led by example." That was true, whether working on the farm, putting in the long hours at the factory or going to shows. "He put in the hours," says Jack, "and he expected the same from everyone. He was not a 'Do as I say guy,' but did it himself and expected us to follow."

"He was curious and cared for the farmers. He wasn't teaching us per se, but we sure learned how he interacted with people."

That curiosity didn't end with the customer. Another of Wilf's key attributes, says Jack, was treating everyone the same. "It didn't matter if you were the president, a new hire or a

floor-sweeper, everybody got the same attention from him."

**Embrace the Risk.** Wilf was no stranger to risk. Examples included abandoning the livestock and signing on for a huge loan from the Bank of Montreal to fund his manufacturing dreams. "He was a huge risk-taker; it would bother us at times," says Paul. "In

the early days, he had nothing to lose. But we'd built the business up to where it was worth something and he'd want to build a new \$25 million plant across the street. If it made sense in theory, he was going to do it; he'd look at the reward, not the risk.

"We'd tell him our concerns and he'd say, 'That's nothing. Don't worry about it, boys. This is what we're going to do.' He

helped take the fear away, but it was tough to accept sometimes."

Those risks affected both the farm and the implement business. Once he got the manufacturing business off the ground, Wilf would return to his fields and was seen running 600-horsepower tractors with air seeders and packers — 100 feet from the nose of the tractor to the packer and putting full systems together. "The neighbors thought he was crazy," says Paul.

"And then he started his slough pump, the Super Slough Sucker, another crazy invention. And it took out our R&D for a full year."

The neighbors knew Wilf was successful, but also thought

he had a screw loose in pumping sloughs when he should've been seeding. But nothing affected him; he didn't listen. He just did his thing. It wasn't about getting wealthy, it was about pushing the envelope.

The slough invention failed to make it commercially, but his sons know no one captures lightning each time. "There are lots of stuff you end up throwing in the bushes and go on to start something else," says Paul. "He wasn't scared to fail. No one builds stars their entire career, but he sure hit on a few of them." There are also a few things in the fencerow that could still be commercially successful today.

**Adapting to Changing Times.** Wilf and his company adapted to the changing

***At the farm shows, Jack and I would sell what was in inventory. But Dad would start telling farmers all the great things he was working on in R&D. He'd undo our sales by telling them to wait til what he'd have next year...***

**— Paul Degelman**

### Hall of Fame Digital Extras

- Video Interview: Jack and Paul Degelman with Mike Lessiter.
- Ag Industry Peers Comment on Wilf Degelman
- Stealth Project
- Keeping Chin Up, Learn from Your Staff
- Wilf's Impact on Canadian Equipment Industry
- A New Chapter with Westcap
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# WELCOME TO THE HALL OF FAME

**Degelman**

ENGINEERED TOUGH



We are proud to honor and congratulate our founder Wilf Degelman on his induction into the Farm Equipment Shortline Legends Hall of Fame. His influence continues to this day, as we still build and design all of our products with Wilf's vision in mind;

**BUILD IT TOUGH,  
BUILD IT HEAVY,  
BUILD IT TO LAST,  
FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.**

- Wilf Degelman



FARM EQUIPMENT  
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*Hall of Fame*

*Wilf Degelman*





DEGELMAN INDUSTRIES

**Wilf Degelman's rock picker took the worst, most back-breaking job on the farm and mechanized it. Only once in a great while does a new product truly change people's lives, but the rock picker did, say Wilf's sons Jack and Paul.**

times and shifts in farming practices. When Western Canadian farmers moved to pulse-crops in the early 90s, harvesting became a new challenge. And when Western Canadian farmers embraced air seeder technology with no-tillage and continuous cropping, Degelman's cultivators and chisel plows were no longer needed. So, the decision was made to exit tillage for a time. Yet farmers quickly realized a unique equipment need as they pursued pulse crops.

Wilf steered the company into a new product that pulse-crop farmers needed — a landroller. Lentils and peas were harvested close to the ground, and Wilf's landroller design pushed the combine-damaging rocks below the ground's surface.

In 1993, just a year after the landroller got going, the firm's next big move was with the Strawmaster heavy harrow. Western Canadian farmers were embracing air seeder technology with no-tillage and continuous cropping, and demand fell off for Degelman's

cultivators and chisel plows.

Continuous cropping brought a new problem that farmers hadn't experienced before, residue problems. For generations, farmers summer-fallowed their land to prepare it for the next year.

"Dad started working on a heavy harrow; a new thing for the time," says Jack. "A couple little harrows were out there, but Dad brought a no-nonsense approach that was simple and super tough. They ran better at 12 mph than they did at 6. You could run it that fast."

The company was in a bind until the Strawmaster got going in 1995. "We were having a tough time making payroll, and everybody pulled up their socks and went to town on this thing. Demo after demo and show after show, the whole company rallied behind this product," says Paul. "Within 4 years, we were selling 600 units a year.

"That changed us from a company that was in debt and trying to figure out how to make payroll, to one where we could expand, pay off the banks and put us in an excellent position to grow the company." The company continued to expand and innovate under his sons' leadership.

By 2010, farming practices across North America demanded a new approach to tillage, and in response, Degelman developed the Pro-Till, a high-speed disc machine that now represents the majority of production.

In 2020, private equity fund Westcap made a \$63 million investment into the company, taking Degelman's ability to grow to a new level. The Degelman family still has ownership, and family members sit on the board. Wilf, now 94, lives at home with daughter, Leanne. **FE**

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# N O M I N A T E



*Farm Equipment* is now accepting nominations for the 21st Annual Dealership of the Year program, recognizing top dealers in two categories:

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- Small-Store Operation (under \$100 million in annual sales revenues)

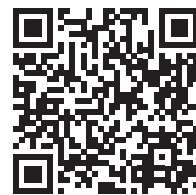


Eligible U.S. and Canadian dealerships can participate. Winners, chosen by an independent panel, will receive a plaque, local media recognition, and be featured in the July/August 2025 issue of *Farm Equipment*.

Nominate at [Farm-Equipment.com/DOY2025](https://Farm-Equipment.com/DOY2025)



Returning for its 16th year, *Rural Lifestyle Dealer's* Dealership of the Year awards program celebrates North America's best rural lifestyle equipment dealers. All North American equipment dealerships are eligible, and nominations can be made by manufacturers, customers, or the dealerships themselves. The winner, chosen by an independent panel, will be featured in *Farm Equipment's* March issue, highlighted in a video series, and receive a commemorative plaque and a special media campaign.



Nominate at [RuralLifestyleDealer.com/DOY2025](https://RuralLifestyleDealer.com/DOY2025)



The *Precision Farming Dealer's* 2025 Most Valuable Dealership program, now in its 13th year, recognizes the organization demonstrating the best in sales, service and support of precision farming technology. Chosen by an independent panel of industry experts, the winning dealership will be featured in a February 2025 *Farm Equipment* cover story, receive a commemorative plaque, and benefit from a special media campaign highlighting their excellence in precision farming technology.



Nominate at [PrecisionFarmingDealer.com/MVD2025](https://PrecisionFarmingDealer.com/MVD2025)




**DAY**  
*in the*  
**LIFE**

Whitney Case considers his truck to be his office because he spends more time there than anywhere else.

# The Long Haul with a Shortline Salesman

Cummings & Bricker shortline salesman visits dealers throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania

*By Mackane Vogel, Associate Editor*

It's around 8:00 a.m. as I approach the home of Whitney Case just south of the Pennsylvania state line near Bel Air, Md. I am sufficiently caffeinated and geared up for what I expect to be a long but adventurous day-in-the-life of a shortline salesman.

Case is a territory manager for Cummings and Bricker (C&B) and travels through Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and parts of New Jersey visiting ag dealers and selling them various products that C&B carries. The company aims to bridge the gap between manufacturer and dealer, providing tools and functions which lower distribution costs through warehousing and marketing.

My morning began when I left my childhood home in Baltimore, Md., where I have been camping out on a work trip for the better part of two weeks. I left around 7:00 a.m. to make the roughly 1 hour drive to meet up with Case. I've spent the past week and change visiting farmers and dealers throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware, but today I am putting my shortline salesman hat on.

***Any good salesman  
in any industry has  
his phone on 24/7...***

**8:12 a.m.**

I give Case a call to let him know that I think I have arrived, although I'm a little unsure — there is a barn with some cattle and a long winding driveway that leads up the hill. He tells me to continue up the driveway and as I approach the top of the hill, I see him standing next to his big silver Dodge pickup truck.

As we jump in the truck and start heading toward our first destination, I remind Case that I'm mostly planning to be a fly on the wall and observe him during a normal work day.

"A normal day would have started about 2 hours ago for me, just so you know. Plus, I hate flies," he grins as he glances over at me.

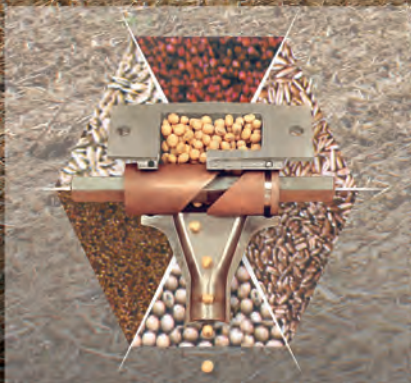
A North Carolina State graduate, Case majored in agriculture with the intent of coming back home to the Whiteford, Md., area to help manage his family's farm. When he came back, he ended up getting a job with the local John Deere dealership — Atlantic Tractor, which happens to be our first stop of the morning — and later was hired by C&B.

As Case tells me more about his background, he pulls up to a traffic light and waves to a truck driver that passes in front of him.



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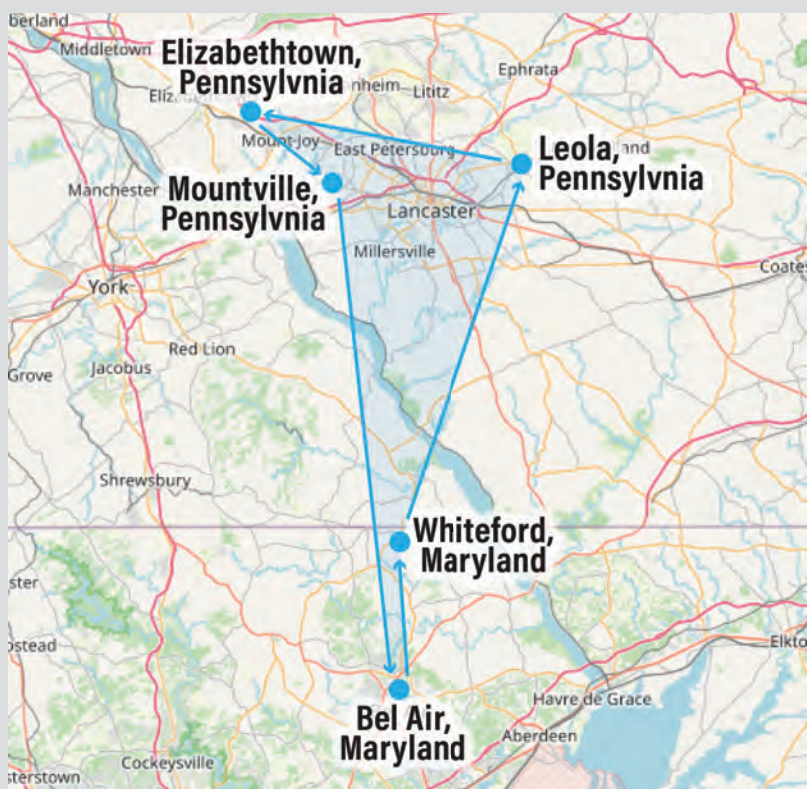
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### Approximate Mileage Breakdown:

**Baltimore to Bel Air:** 40 miles

**Bel Air to Whiteford:** 20 miles

**Whiteford to Leola:** 50 miles

**Leola to Elizabethtown:** 25 miles

**Elizabethtown to Mountville:** 20 miles

**Mountville to Bel Air:** 50 miles

**Bel Air to Baltimore:** 40 miles

**Total:** 245 miles

“There goes my uncle,” Case says. “Can you tell I grew up around here?”

#### 8:41 a.m.

We arrive at Atlantic Tractor and Case greets a few of his former co-workers. While he used to work at this very location as a store manager and inventory control person, he now frequents the store not only on behalf of C&B (Atlantic Tractor carries not just Deere products but also Stihl and several other shortlines), but as a customer.

After dropping off a baler and talking business with a few of his clients, he stops by the parts counter to pick up a part he needs for his own farm operation. Case has the unique advantage of having worked on almost all sides of agriculture. As a farmer himself, he knows what customers are looking for and as a former dealership employee, he understands that side of the business too.

Our first stop ends up being a relatively quick one because we have a lot of business to do in the greater Lancaster County region of Pennsylvania.

Case is planning on pitching some products to a few clients and he also has logistics to discuss with some of them regarding the upcoming Keystone Farm Show and Ag Progress Days — two of the biggest ag expos in the state of Pennsylvania.

Another part of Case’s job involves helping his dealer clients decide what machinery they want displayed at various farm trade shows and helping coordinate the transportation of certain products.

***My truck is my office. I spend more time on the road than I do in my house or anywhere else...***

#### 9:37 a.m.

We leave Atlantic Tractor and head north for Leola, Pa., where we will stop at Agriteer’s newest location. The drive will take about an hour. Case refers to this part of his day as office hours.

“I spend more time in my truck than I do in my house or anywhere else,” Case says. “My truck really is my office.”

He explains that while Agriteer is another relatively large dealership, that won’t be the case for all the visits we make. C&B works with many different types and sizes of dealerships.

Agriteer carries Fendt, Claas and Massey Ferguson products, but much like Atlantic Tractor, they also sell products from about a dozen other shortlines including Landoll, Drago and Tubeline. Case has built up a good relationship with several of the representatives at the Leola location. He tells me how important trust is when it comes to being a shortline salesman. One of the reasons he likes working for C&B is because a lot of the values needed to sell shortline equipment are similar to running a family farm or a small family dealership.

“That’s one of the things I always really liked about working with Cummings and Bricker,” Case says. “It’s still basically a small, family-owned business. We’re flexible. We’re easy to work with. You need help with that? No problem. We’re going to take care of it. You don’t get that kind of thing from everyone in this industry.”

Case never turns his phone off and considers himself to be on the clock pretty much 24/7. In fact, he is technically on vacation — his wife and kids went down to their favorite vacation spot the night before I met up with him, but

Case says he will get there a couple days late.

#### 10:46 a.m.

We arrive at Agriteer in Leola and I follow Case inside. He’s got his iPad with him, ready to show off some new



products that could be of interest to this dealership. Case first says hello to sales rep Richard Rutt. He breaks the ice by asking about a neighbor he has who used to be his customer at Atlantic Tractor but is now a customer of Rutt's at Agriteer. After some brief banter, Rutt asks Case what else is going on.

Case hands over some literature regarding HLA Attachments, Diamond, Rossi and a few other shortlines. He tells Rutt that he knows Agriteer has a lot of brands and products on their plate at the moment, but he wants to at least show him a few new products that might be of interest to him.

They discuss the pamphlets and Case shows Rutt a few videos of some Rossi products that he has been impressed with in his own use — another instance where his farming experience helps add some credibility.

Case also shares this info with sales reps Derek Weaver and Randall Wenger, who each have an office on either side of Rutt's at the Leola Agriteer location. While Case speaks with Wenger, I



**Whitney Case (r) chats about upcoming trade shows and McHale balers with Austin Zimmerman (l) at Ag-Com, a shortline dealership in Elizabethtown, Pa.**

notice he has a copy of the June edition of *Farm Equipment* sitting on his desk. The cover story depicts an installment of our color conversion series — a customer switching from Massey Ferguson products to New Holland.

"Not the story we want to hear but hey, it happens and maybe we can learn from it," Wenger says.

A few minutes later while Case explains new product information and opportunities to Weaver, I notice a few key things about the conversation.

First, this type of sales pitch isn't even a long lost cousin of the type of cold calls I once made for a company which shall not be named right after I got out of college — there is no hostility or choice words. Instead, it's all about trust and wanting to help each other out.

Case tells Weaver even if he and his Agriteer associates are not interested in saying yes to a new product line right this second, he is here to share information with them and keep them in the know on possible opportunities.



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MACKANE VOGEL

**Whitney Case (r) uses his iPad to show Justin Weaver (l) some product videos on the front lot of Ebling's Service Plus, a shortline dealership in Mountville, Pa.**

"It's just something for you guys to think about," Case says. "It's an opportunity and this way you can't say I never offered it to you."

The products in question include Rossi roller bars, HLA Attachments straw & lime discharge buckets and a potential opportunity with a new product line from Dion.

Weaver and Case discuss these options for a solid 30-40 minutes while continuing to look over videos and

brochures. Eventually, Case decides to leave his Agriteer clients with the information he has presented and tells them to think it over.

Even though no deals were decided upon, it is very clear that both sides considered it a productive and beneficial meeting.

**11:57 a.m.**

We depart from Agriteer and make our way west to a Lancaster County

lunch staple — Shady Maple Smorgasbord. On our way there, Case explains how he measures success in his role and just as I suspected, it's not as black and white as asking yourself 'did I make a sale today?'

"Companies will always measure success with numbers," Case says. "But on a personal level, I look at it a little differently. If you look at all the visits you made in a given day, ask yourself — was anybody unhappy? Was anybody upset with me? No. They're all happy with me and with Cummings & Bricker because they're happy with the products we have already sold them. If you can keep everyone happy and maintain that attitude at every dealership you go to, the sales will follow."

**12:15 a.m.**

We stop for lunch and the Shady Maple Smorgasbord immediately lives up to its name as Case and I both fill our plates with a smorgasbord of different items from the buffet. The place is also jam packed, which is always a good

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sign at any restaurant. The mashed potatoes and gravy took the number one prize for me with the pulled pork trailing just slightly behind.

#### 1:56 p.m.

After lunch we cover another 30 miles or so to get over to Ag-Com in Elizabethtown, Pa. At the start of our day, Case made it clear that he wanted to take me to 4 distinctly different dealerships to give me a true feel for the wide variety of dealers that C&B works with. As soon as we arrive at Ag-Com, I can already tell just how different this is from our first two stops. This is a much smaller, family-owned operation with two brothers — Austin and Cody Zimmerman — working as the main technicians.

Case says Ag-Com ended up as a C&B dealer when Case went to them with the opportunity to become a stocking McHale dealer. McHale is one of the premium lines that C&B carries and Ag-Com has done well with the product line so far selling round balers, mowers, bale wrappers, hay rakes and more.

Today, Case has a few items on the agenda that he wants to talk over with the Zimmermans. First, because their partnership is still somewhat new, he wants to check in and see how they're doing with the products.

"I want to make sure that they are moving along, getting stuff done on hay season products and that they don't need any additional help from me," Case tells me. "It's a good idea to see where they are on inventory. That way I can report back and make a note that they've got two bailers left and think they've got them sold. This way we can do some forecasting and find out what's working and what's not working from a marketing standpoint."

This goes back to the way Case measures success. He wants to make it abundantly clear to his clients that he is there to help them and is a partner with them. Just because he has made a sale to them, does not mean his work is done.

Another item Case covers while chatting with the Zimmerman brothers is Ag Progress Days — Pennsylvania's largest outdoor ag expo which is held annually at Penn State's campus.

Case shows off some Rossi products to them and the brothers take interest in a specific Rossi rake. They ask if Case can arrange for it to be on Ag-Com's lot at Ag Progress Days — a good initial sign that they are serious about their interest in this product.

This visit certainly checks the box as a success and a good use of time for Case. And there's still time for us to

make one more stop as we make our way back down south.

#### 4:14 p.m.

About 20 miles later, we arrive at Ebling's Service Plus in Mountville, Pa.



### Learn More Online

To read more about Mackane Vogel's East Coast road trip, check out the full blog here [FarmEquipment.com/0924](http://FarmEquipment.com/0924)



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This is yet another distinctly different company from our prior 3 stops. Ebling's has historically been much more focused on lawn & garden, but Case tells me that recently, they've been dipping their toes in the water of the ag and construction industries. They currently carry products from Kioti, Avant, Stihl and several other shortlines.

Case says that because this final visit of the day is getting dangerously close to the end of the work day for his clients at Ebling's, it's important to take a more casual approach and not be too forward about pushing sales. Instead, Case uses this visit to chat with sales manager Justin Weaver about the overall state of the business, how satisfied they have been with C&B and, like the prior visit, if there is anything special they might want to arrange to have at their booth

for upcoming ag expos in the area.

Case and Weaver chat for 30-40 minutes before the conversation eventually allows Case an opportunity to show Weaver some new product videos. They step outside and begin to review some footage and compare what they are looking at to some pieces of Kioti equipment that Ebling's has on the lot in Mountville.

Once again, Case leaves Weaver and the Ebling's staff with something to think about for the future, rather than trying to be pushy at the end of a long work day.

### 5:27 p.m.

Case and I are finally done for the day, but we still have a lot of windshield time before we make it back to his place, and I have even more windshield

time after that for my drive from his house back to Baltimore City.

I ask him if he's glad to be done for the day. He laughs and tells me he's just getting started. He still has other work to attend to on the farm at home once his day job is complete. And even then, he reminds me that his day job is really never complete.

"Any good salesman in any industry has his phone on 24/7," Case says. "There's no downtime. It's like I told you, today was a vacation day for me. And most days in general don't end for me until about 11:30 p.m. or quarter to midnight."

But it's clear that Case wouldn't have it any other way. He loves what he does and there is a gleaming sense of pride coming from him for another job well done and a full day's work.

And despite what he may tell you, he will get a chance to relax while doing some fishing and ATV riding with his kids on his vacation. But you can be sure that if one of his customers has a question or needs something, they will be able to count on Case for anything at any time. **FE**



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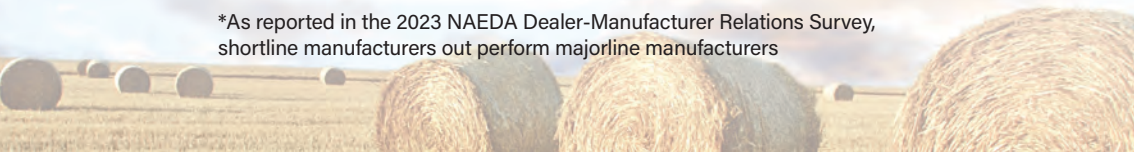


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# 55 Shortline Innovations for 55 Years

A list of the most impactful shortline innovations in *Farm Equipment* magazine's 55-year history

By Mike Lessiter, Editor/Publisher

To mark *Farm Equipment's* 55 year history in 2024, farmers, the farm equipment community and Lessiter Media staff took on the challenge of identifying the 55 greatest innovations from shortline manufacturers since 1969.

Starting from a list of 78 shortline products across 8 categories that were released since 1969, more than 2,100 votes were tallied to help identify the innovations deemed most important to the North American ag equipment business. The initial list was prepared from the "Timeline of Ag Equipment Firsts," which was released in 2007 and updated in 2024.

Note: Some of the brands seen below (such as New Holland) were considered shortlines prior to mergers and acquisitions that occurred later.

For feedback, comments or suggestions for this list, contact [mlessiter@lessitermedia.com](mailto:mlessiter@lessitermedia.com)

## 1970

- Melroe Mfg. introduces the quick-attach "Bob-Tach" implement system.
- Avery Weigh-Tronix invents a weigh bar for the Art's-Way grinder mixer to accurately weigh and dispense feed rations to different groups of livestock.

## 1972



**TOPS IN HAY & FORAGE...** Gary Vermeer designs and introduces a modern baler to produce "big" round hay bales. The first model formed a 6-foot wide by 7-foot diameter bale that weighed more than 2,000 pounds.

- DICKEY-John introduces the first automatic and fully portable hand-held moisture tester.
- Gleaner introduces the first electric-over-hydraulic controls for combines.
- Kuhn develops the disc mower forage cutting technology.
- The first plastic bag silage storage system is released in the U.S. by Ag-Bag Corp.

## 1973



**TOPS IN APPLICATION...** Ag-Chem Equipment introduces the first 3-wheel applicator for fertilizer and pesticides. The TerraGator features high-flotation tires to minimize compaction.

- Preston Davey and Art Ross build an air seeder in Saskatchewan. Manufacturing begins 3 years later and 17 Pride Seeders are sold into North Dakota and Western Canada.

## 1975



**TOPS IN HARVEST & GRAIN HANDLING ...** New Holland releases the first rotary combine (twin rotors) with its TR70.

- Kinze Mfg. introduces its folding planter technology, leading the way to wider planters that farmers can move down narrow bridges.

## 1976

- DICKEY-John creates a new market for speed sensing on mobile vehicles via its radar ground speed sensor, which measured true ground speed independent of wheel slip or rolling radius.

## Claas: Most Cited Specialty Equipment Innovator Since 1969

Four Claas innovations were cited in the list of just under 80 innovations voted on by the farm equipment community. These 4 innovations included the row-sensing technology for Ford combines, net wrap for round bales, first self-propelled large-scale mower (45 feet) and 40-foot grain header.





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## Top Innovations by Product Category

1. **Seeding & Planting:** Precision Planting (2008), Martin (1987), Kinze Mfg. (1975), Concord (1977), Kinze Mfg. (1983)
2. **Precision Technology:** Trimble (1992), Ag Leader (1992), Sabanto Ag (2019), Raven (1979), Autofarm (1999)
3. **Tractors:** Caterpillar (1987), Fendt (1995), Cummins (1978), Melroe (1970) Versatile (1977)
4. **Tillage:** Brillion (1998), Salford (2001), Ingersoll (2000), Bush Hog (1984), Horsch (2008)
5. **Hay & Forage:** Vermeer (1972), Hesston (1978), Claas (1985), Kuhn (1972) Ag-Bag (1972)
6. **Harvest & Grain Handling:** New Holland (1975), MacDon (2005), Gleaner (1972), Claas (1979), Shelbourne-Reynolds (1990)
7. **Application:** Ag-Chem (1973), Willmar AirRide (1985), Loral (1980), Equipment Technologies (1997), SprayTarget (1976)
8. **Dairy & Livestock:** Lely (1995), Avery Weigh Tronix/Art's Way (1970), Hydro Engineering (1980), Haybuster (1980)

## 1979

- Raven's sprayer controller developments accurately measures the flow of pesticides with the ability to shut off individual sprayer nozzles.
- Claas develops the first row-sensing, auto-pilot technology for combines produced for Ford. Fingers mounted on the header directly connect to the steering system. The manufacturer also develops folding combine grain tank doors.

## 1980

- Monosem introduces vacuum planters, a new method to accurately place seeds at a higher, more uniform plant population.
- Haybuster introduces the balebuster that allows operators to grind and more efficiently distribute hay bales.
- Loral (AgChem) introduces Air Spread and AirMax boom-type, truck-mounted fertilizer spreaders with air-boom delivery.
- Hydro Engineering is the first company to introduce a pumping unit to propel manure through a hose system for soil injection.

## 1983

- Kinze Mfg. introduces its "push-type" planter row unit mounted on the front of its double frame toolbar, allowing growers to "split the rows." Growers can plant corn in 30-38-inch rows, then quickly switch to 15-19-inch soybean rows.

## 1984

- The Bush Hog Ro-Till (marketed in the South under the name of Brown-Hardin) hits the market. Marketed as "Precision Applied Tillage," it will be considered the forerunner of strip-till rigs.

## 1985

- The prototype of the Willmar AirRide self-propelled sprayer is unveiled to address a void for a North American-built, high-capacity, self-propelled, high-clearance sprayer. The unit features a 100-foot boom, 118-hp engine, 4-wheel hydrostatic drive and a convertible chassis to accept a liquid or granular applicator.

## 1977

- Howard and Brian Dahl introduce small grain air seeding with their Concord air drill, the first to feature row-by-row packing, precision depth control and below-the-seed fertilizing with on-the-go changes to seeding and fertilizer rates.
- Versatile introduces the 150 tractor, the world's first bi-directional unit. The seat and console of the tractor swivel 180 degrees, while offering full-time hydrostatic drive to all four wheels and articulated steering.

## 1978

- Hesston introduces the industry's first "large square" baler, offering significant efficiencies over smaller bale sizes.
- Orthman designs the disc stabilizer, a rigid disc with hydraulics that pivots on command. This Tracker is the first ground-engaging implement steering system.

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## Top 10 Game-Changing Shortline Innovations Since 1969

1. Lely Astronaut Milking Robot (1995)
2. Ag-Chem Terra-Gator (1973)
3. Vermeer Automatic Round Baler (1972)
4. Willmar AirRide Self-Propelled Sprayer (1985)
5. Precision Planting 20/20 Seed Sense Monitor (2008)
6. Caterpillar Mobi-Trac Rubber Track System (1987)
7. Fendt Continuously Variable Transmission (1995)
8. New Holland Twin Rotor Combine (1975)
9. Trimble Real-Time Kinetic Technology (1992)
10. Avery Weigh Tronix/Art's Way Weigh Bar System (1970)

- Claas develops net wrap as an alternative to twine for round hay bales. It decreases hay losses and aids in retaining hay nutrition during storage.

### 1987



**TOPS INTRACTORS...** Caterpillar introduces the “Mobi-Trac” rubber track system with its Challenger tractor line, the first tractor to use rubber tracks.

- Howard Martin files a patent for the first ground-driven row cleaner for no-till, followed by the first spiked closing wheel and floating row cleaners.

### 1988

- Hesston introduces the first fully automatic round baler.
- Crary Air Reels are developed to evenly distribute grain at the combine header and improve harvesting efficiencies.

### 1989

- Larry and Bill Matlack release the Stinger Self-Propelled Bale Stacker, which changes how farmers handle large bales and eliminates the need for multiple machines and labor to handle baled hay and straw.
- Richard Follmer, owner of Progressive Farm Products, invents the mid-mount, dual-placement strip-till toolbar, the first manufacturer to find commercial success in the strip-till sector.

### 1990

- Shelbourne-Reynolds sells its first U.S. stripper-header. Within 5 years, adoption surges as Western wheat belt growers see the benefits of stripped straw in their no-till systems.
- Eugene Keeton, Jon Kinzenbaw and Harry Deckler develop the simple brush meter innovation that holds seeds in place and brushes away excess seed. With 90% accuracy, it allows soybean growers to use planters instead of drills.

### 1992

- Al Myers releases the Ag Leader Yield Monitor 2000, the first accurate combine yield monitor, which was a significant achievement in precision farming.

- Yetter Manufacturing releases the Residue Manager in Coulter Combination, one of several iterations in the market as residue management needs were becoming understood.
- **TOPS IN PRECISION...** Trimble develops real-time kinematic technology to allow accurate moment-by-moment updates, invaluable for high-accuracy guidance of equipment.
- Satloc introduces the first GPS lightbar, initially designed for guidance in aerial applications.

### 1994

- Eugene Keeton files a patent for the Keeton Seed Firmer, an attachment to maintain effective seed-to-soil contact in no-till.
- Hesston introduces the first self-propelled windrower using disc mower-cutting technology.

### 1995



**TOPS IN DAIRY & LIVESTOCK...** Lely introduces the Lely Astronaut milking robot. It would be regarded by some as the most important invention of the 20th century for dairy farmers.

- Fendt introduces the first continuously variable transmission tractor with its Vario launch. The technology combines the infinite speeds of a hydrostatic transmission with the efficiency of a powershift by using a planetary gear set to split engine output into a hydrostatic section and a mechanical section, eliminating traditional transmission gears.

### 1997

- Yamaha's Rmax drone, a single-rotor helicopter with 4 gallons of spray tank capacity, is the first drone to be used for spraying, taking place in Japan.
- DICKEY-John couples its “radar-ground speed as true ground speed” technology with a drive-shaft sensor and to display to the farmer, true wheel slip functionality. Patented in 1988, the Dickey John TPM II tractor performance monitor is soon adopted by tractor OEMs.

### 1998

- **TOPS IN TILLAGE...** Brillion Iron Works tests the “Zone Commander,” considered the “first” vertical tillage tool.

### 1999

- AutoFarm/Novariant launches the first commercially available automated steering system for farm equipment and 2 years later announces sub-inch steering with a front-mounted implement.

### 2001

- Salford develops the Residue Tillage Specialist system for high-speed, no-till farming.

### 2005

- MacDon introduces the first flexible draper header, increasing productivity when harvesting soybeans.



## 2006

- AutoFarm and Orthman Mfg. introduce AFTracker, the first implement steering system based on RTK GPS

## 2007

- Brillion Farm Equipment introduces a machine that combines both zone-till and strip-till in one unit.

## 2008



Horsch introduces its Joker high-speed compact disc to North America. Neither vertical tillage nor traditional tillage, it breaks down residue while conserving moisture and preventing erosion.

- **TOPS IN SEEDING...** Precision Planting introduces the 20/20 Seed Sense monitor that pinpoints the percentages of seed singulation for each row, seed spacing, ground contact and down pressure. Within a year, it introduces the 2020/20 Air-Force system to control down pressure on individual row units.

## 2013



Kinze demonstrates an autonomous grain cart and driverless tractor that follow the combine through the field. It unloads from the combine into the cart, returns and parks following unloading and stopping, eliminating further instruction from the combine operator.

- Ag technology startup 640 Labs creates its Drive (later renamed Fieldview Drive), a device that reads data from the CAN bus of tractors and connects portable devices.

## 2019



Sabanto Ag builds its first autonomy units and kits. **FE**



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# Dealer Survey Reveals Winners & Losers Among Shortline Equipment OEMs

Bourgault dominated NAEDA's annual survey of dealers;  
1st-time analyses shows deeper look into metrics dealers value most

By Mike Lessiter, Editor/Publisher

**T**he 2024 North American Equipment Dealer Assn. (NAEDA) 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer

Relations Survey results are in and it shows again what dealers value most in their manufacturer relationships and expectations. It also makes clear who is performing best and who is moving up the ranks, and who is falling backward.

Much of the market anticipates the release of the survey each summer. The report is decidedly important to some and outright dismissed by others, either due to their poor scores or perhaps a belief that catering to dealers can be counterproductive to bottom-line results. Some manufacturers promote their good scores to prospective dealers and end-users.

Dealers, meanwhile, have used it as a point of reference on prospective lines or in rationalization decisions that follow mergers and acquisitions, and the occasional discussion during dealer advisory board meetings. While

NAEDA does not break out results by segment (tillage, planting, etc.), dealers can examine the manufacturers in those categories when comparing suppliers.

One manufacturer executive noted that he and his team anxiously await the survey results each year to gauge performance with their first customer — the dealer.

In many ways, the results are akin to a “seal of approval” and an indication of what a dealer might expect upon choosing any given OEM in a decision to add or keep a line.

The graphic below shares the categories

measured in the NAEDA survey, and also the relative weight that dealers place on each item.

The relative importance of the categories changed since last year's survey. While product quality and parts availability remained unchanged as 1 and 2, the 2024 survey showed that parts quality, manufacturer responsiveness and product technical support moved up to round out the 5 most important characteristics. Showing how different the business conditions have become, product availability was the number-3 concern in 2023, while it had dropped to number 7 in 2024.

**Table 1. Summary of % Change  
2023 vs. 2024 - Grouped Scores**

	Product & Parts Availability Score	Product & Parts Availability % Change	Product & Parts Quality Score	Product & Parts Quality % Change	Admin. Programs & Protocols Score	Admin. Programs & Protocols % Change
Art's Way	4.94	-0.20%	4.86	-3.19%	4.65	-7.40%
Bobcat	4.72	+34.86%	4.90	+18.50%	4.07	+1.27%
Bourgault	<b>6.00</b>	+9.79%	<b>6.14</b>	+3.28%	<b>5.83</b>	+0.65%
Bush Hog	4.72	-1.87%	5.62	-0.44%	4.72	-10.60%
Degelman	5.94	+10.20%	6.08	+2.36%	5.33	-3.69%
Elmer's Mfg.	5.56	-4.88%	5.82	-4.04%	5.20	-7.80%
Gehl	<b>3.11</b>	+11.49%	<b>4.74</b>	+11.28%	<b>3.12</b>	-7.61%
Great Plains	5.52	+4.64%	5.92	+0.51%	5.57	-2.32%
H & S Mfg.	5.69	+1.97%	5.73	-2.80%	5.36	-2.03%
Highline Mfg.	5.72	+10.22%	5.91	+11.19%	5.52	+6.00%
Kinze	5.10	+14.86%	5.36	+0.28%	4.71	+3.53%
Krone	5.54	+12.72%	6.08	+5.74%	5.21	+3.85%
Kuhn NA	5.21	+8.32%	5.81	+2.20%	5.23	+0.30%
Land Pride	5.53	+9.94%	5.95	+4.48%	5.57	+3.44%
Landoll	5.39	+2.87%	5.87	-1.10%	5.42	-0.34%
MacDon	4.55	+2.25%	5.32	-2.21%	5.04	-5.27%
Meyer Mfg.	5.77	+3.13%	6.09	-1.78%	5.72	-2.87%
Rhino	5.27	+16.59%	5.66	+7.00%	5.24	+5.32%
Unverferth	5.54	+3.65%	5.91	-1.09%	5.41	-3.40%
Vermeer	5.69	+0.26%	5.72	-3.05%	5.56	-4.03%
Woods	5.22	+6.97%	5.52	-0.27%	5.03	-2.33%

**Note: Green** = highest score in that category; **Red** = lowest score

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence

## What Dealers Value Most from Equipment Suppliers

1. Product Quality **95%**
2. Parts Availability **93%**
3. Parts Quality **92%**
4. Manufacturer Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns **92%**
5. Product Technical Support **91%**
6. Warranty Payments **88%**
7. Product Availability **87%**
8. Warranty Procedures **86%**
9. Communication with Management **84%**
10. Marketing & Advertising Support **74%**
11. Return Privileges **72%**

Percentages include the “Very Important” and “Fairly Important” scores

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.' 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence

**Figure 1**



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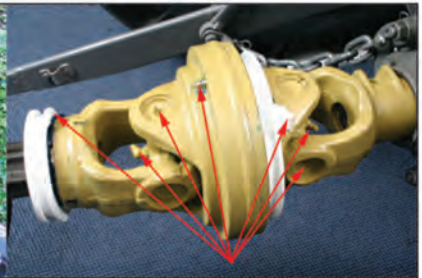
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## Table 2. Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey Shortline Results – 2024

RATINGS SCALE: 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 7 = Extremely Satisfied	Mean Score	Communications w/ Management	Mfr. Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns	Marketing & Advertising Support	Overall Satisfaction	Parts Availability	Parts Quality	Product Availability	Product Quality	Product Technical Support	Return Privileges	Warranty Payments	Warranty Procedures	2024 Mean Average	Mean Average 3-year Change
															
Art's Way	4.70	4.74	4.52	4.64	4.74	4.93	5.07	4.95	4.64	4.45	4.66	4.48	4.55	4.70	+13.47%
Bobcat	4.32	3.95	3.59	4.55	4.35	4.66	5.09	4.78	4.71	4.28	4.43	3.93	3.49	4.32	-6.01%
Bourgault	5.96	5.91	5.91	6.05	6.27	5.95	6.14	6.05	6.14	6.27	5.82	5.55	5.5	5.96	-2.69%
Bush Hog	4.98	4.76	4.69	4.93	5.17	4.46	5.63	4.97	5.6	5.39	4.94	4.16	5.08	4.98	-10.42%
Degelman	5.52	5.15	5.19	5.12	5.65	5.92	5.96	5.96	6.19	5.69	5	5.23	5.19	5.52	+1.16%
Elmer's Mfg.	5.34	5.21	5.11	4.95	5.16	5.58	5.79	5.53	5.84	5.58	5.11	5.05	5.16	5.34	-2.78%
Gehl	3.31	2.17	2.02	2.87	2.55	4.42	5.04	1.79	4.43	3.23	4.13	3.51	3.55	3.31	-24.15%
Great Plains	5.61	5.51	5.48	5.59	5.85	5.73	5.92	5.31	5.92	5.76	5.23	5.54	5.51	5.61	-2.55%
H & S Mfg.	5.47	5.42	5.23	5.22	5.66	5.73	5.74	5.64	5.71	5.61	5.22	5.32	5.16	5.47	-6.01%
Highline Mfg.	5.63	5.52	5.39	5.33	5.88	5.7	5.94	5.73	5.88	5.55	5.52	5.55	5.52	5.63	-4.42%
Kinze	4.93	4.27	4.33	4.82	4.92	5.28	5.49	4.92	5.22	4.75	5.85	4.73	4.62	4.93	-4.18%
Krone	5.41	5.35	5.11	4.72	5.7	5.65	6.02	5.43	6.13	5.6	5.02	5.09	5.11	5.41	+1.12%
Kuhn NA	5.31	5.11	5.09	5.16	5.5	5.59	5.86	4.82	5.75	5.57	4.91	5.1	5.25	5.31	-0.87%
Land Pride	5.62	5.59	5.44	5.41	5.84	5.83	5.99	5.23	5.91	5.73	5.32	5.55	5.54	5.62	+8.14%
Landoll	5.51	5.33	5.34	5.13	5.72	5.6	5.83	5.17	5.9	5.75	5.38	5.52	5.48	5.51	-3.20%
MacDon	5.04	4.95	4.81	5.05	5.22	5.18	5.47	3.92	5.16	5.52	4.95	5.13	5.1	5.04	-11.60%
Meyer Mfg.	5.81	5.76	5.73	5.59	5.95	5.85	6	5.68	6.17	5.98	5.63	5.59	5.73	5.81	-0.27%
Rhino	5.31	4.99	5.05	5.09	5.3	5.36	5.59	5.18	5.72	5.45	5.15	5.47	5.38	5.31	-0.30%
Unverferth	5.51	5.34	5.27	5.22	5.74	5.82	5.87	5.26	5.94	5.61	5.29	5.37	5.35	5.51	-2.25%
Vermeer	5.64	5.73	5.5	5.45	5.97	5.73	5.95	5.65	5.48	5.8	5.47	5.46	5.43	5.64	-4.46%
Woods	5.10	5.60	4.63	4.68	4.94	5.30	5.54	5.13	5.49	5.18	4.78	4.93	5.00	5.10	-5.09%
Grand Total	5.24	5.06	4.93	5.03	5.34	5.44	5.71	5.10	5.62	5.37	5.13	5.06	5.08	5.24	

Note: **Green** = highest score in that category; **Red** = lowest score

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence

### New Analysis of 2024 Data

Ag Equipment Intelligence provided additional analyses this year to simplify the results. As such, it consolidated the 12 individual categories into 3 broader areas: product/parts availability, product/parts quality and administrative programs/protocols.

The results of that first-ever aggregation of the shortline manufacturers into those 3 categories, and the change year-over-year is shown in Table 1. In these grouped categories, Degelman, Meyer Manufacturing and Bourgault claimed the top spot in product/parts availability, product and parts quality, and administrative programs/protocols, respectively.

Gehl was the bottom-dweller in all three of those same categories.

Table 1 also shows the year-over-year change in performance of the shortliners in those broad areas.

### Observations on Manufacturer Type

According to NAEDA's report on the different manufacturer classifications (full-line, shortline, tractors and outdoor power equipment), the "aggregate mean trend by manufacturer classification decreased from the previous years for all categories in each of the manufacturer classifications, except for OPE, which increased."

In other words, dealers' expectations following Covid and the supply chain challenges have largely increased — and aren't being met.

As a whole, the shortline manufacturers slipped in performance between 2023 and 2024. In aggregate, only the performance in parts availability and product availability increased among the shortline manufacturers in 2024; all other categories were down. The same was true of full-line manufacturers. Of the tractor manufacturers, only product availability improved in 2024.

Overall, dealers report a satisfaction level with shortline manufactures of 73%. As usual, dealers are less forgiving



with their full line (62% satisfaction) and tractor manufacturers (57%). Outdoor power equipment has the same 73% satisfaction as shortlines.

### Company by Company Results

As seen in Table 2, 4 shortline manufacturers rose to the top in dealers' rankings. Bourgault took the top spot in 9 categories. Meyer Manufacturing led in 2 categories and Degelman and Kinze each took the lead in 2.

On the other side of the equation, 2 manufacturers sit at the bottom of dealers' rankings. Gehl finished last in 11 categories, while Bobcat finished worst in warranty procedures. Both companies were at the bottom last year, though Gehl claimed one more "worst" score from Bobcat.

*Ag Equipment Intelligence's* historical data tables also shed light to those manufacturers "on the rise." Land Pride, Rhino and Highline improved in every single category vs. their 2023 figures.

At the same time, several manufacturers showed significant negative

## About the 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey

According to the North American Equipment Dealer Assn. (NAEDA), the 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey was distributed to dealership contacts in late March 2024 and remained active until May 24, 2024. Multiple reminders were sent to all who had not yet completed the survey. Each survey link was unique to the recipient, which prevented the survey from being taken more than once. To assist in distribution, several manufacturer brands provided lists of their U.S. and Canadian dealer networks. Duplicate email addresses were removed via a multi-step process. In total, 61 manufacturers were rated in 12 categories.

Dealer responses were collected anonymously by a third-party research platform. Dealer responses were received from 49 U.S. states, Puerto Rico and 10 Canadian provinces. Each respondent rated an average of 4 manufacturers. Of the respondents, 80% identified themselves as owners (51%), general managers (15%) and dealer-principals (14%).

change. Elmer's Manufacturing declined in every single category vs. 2023. Nearly as significant was the fall of Art's Way and Bush Hog, which both declined in every category but one — product availability.

Last year, Art's Way was one of the success stories of the 2023 survey, having rebounded to low scores to notch its highest scores in 5 years in all 12 categories. (See "Art's Way Reacts to Low

Scores with Focus on Improvement & Earns Highest Scores in 5 Years," September 2023 *Farm Equipment*.)

Following are the manufacturers' performance in each of the studied categories, in the order of what is important to dealers. The numerical scores are based on a scale of 1 (extremely dissatisfied to 7 (extremely satisfied), while the trending data is expressed in percentage change.

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Overall Satisfaction

**Highest:** Bourgault (6.27), Vermeer (5.97), Meyer Mfg. (5.95)  
**Trending Up:** Rhino (+7.07%), Highline (+5.76%), Land Pride (+3.73%)  
**Lowest:** Gehl (2.55), Bobcat (4.35), Art's Way (4.74)  
**Trending Down:** Gehl (-15.56%), Elmers Mfg. (-12.84%), Art's Way (-7.96%)

1. Product Quality

**Highest:** Degelman (6.19), Meyer Mfg.

(6.17), Bourgault (6.14)  
**Trending Up:** Highline Mfg. (+7.30%), Bobcat (+3.74%), Rhino (+3.44%)  
**Lowest:** Gehl (4.43), Art's Way (4.64), Bobcat (4.71)  
**Trending Down:** MacDon (-10.26%), Art's Way (-7.20%), Kinze (-6.79%)

2. Parts Availability

**Highest:** Bourgault (5.95), Degelman (5.92), Meyer Mfg. (5.85)  
**Trending Up:** Bobcat (+24.93%), Gehl (+14.81%), Highline Mfg. (+10.68%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (4.42), Bush Hog (4.46), Bobcat (4.66)  
**Trending Down:** Bush Hog (-20.07%), Elmers Mfg. (-6.38%), Meyer Mfg. (-4.26%)

3. Parts Quality

**Highest:** Bourgault (6.14), Krone (6.02), Meyer Mfg. (6.00)  
**Trending Up:** Highline Mfg. (+8.39%), Gehl (+3.28%), Rhino (+2.95%)  
**Lowest:** Gehl (5.04), Art's Way (5.07), Bobcat (5.09)  
**Trending Down:** Elmers Mfg.

Production-Sized Tractor Performance

For the first time, *Ag Equipment Intelligence* examined the broad tractor results by horsepower range. What follows below is the dealers' rankings of production-sized tractors. The small tractors, meanwhile, are examined by *Rural Lifestyle Dealer* (see p. 102).

The bigger tractor manufacturers, such as JCB, McCormick and Versatile, generally score poorly vs. their small-tractor counterparts. But when examined on their own, there are a few surprises.

As seen in the table below, Versatile earned the top marks in all categories but 5, but scored most poorly in product

availability, which has long been a problem for the formerly Russian-owned OEM.

JCB took the top position in 3 categories (overall satisfaction, parts availability and product availability), while McCormick was best in parts quality and product quality.

In examining the 3 "binned" categories put together by *Ag Equipment Intelligence*, McCormick showed the greatest 1-year percentage growth in all 3 areas, while Versatile fell in the same categories. JCB performed better in product and parts availability, but failed to reach last year's scores in the other two areas.

Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey Production Tractor Results – 2024

RATINGS SCALE: 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 7 = Extremely Satisfied	Mean Score	Communications w/ Management	Mfr. Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns	Marketing & Advertising Support	Overall Satisfaction	Parts Availability	Parts Quality	Product Availability	Product Quality	Product Technical Support	Return Privileges	Warranty Payments	Warranty Procedures	2024 Mean Average	Mean Average 3-year Change
JCB	4.05	3.73	3.60	4.14	4.39	4.22	4.87	4.14	4.09	3.36	3.91	4.20	3.91	4.05	-11.63%
McCormick	3.81	3.73	2.96	3	3.96	4.46	5.23	4.04	4.69	3.15	4.38	2.88	3.23	3.81	-10.71%
Versatile	4.20	4.37	3.8	4.68	3.8	4.16	5.1	2.3	4.33	4.41	4.44	4.54	4.44	4.20	-17.29%
Grand Total	4.02	3.94	3.45	3.94	4.05	4.28	5.07	3.49	4.37	3.64	4.24	3.87	3.86		

Note: Green = highest score in that category; Red = lowest score

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence

Production Tractor Summary of % Change 2023 vs 2024

	Product & Parts Availability Score	Product & Parts Availability % Change	Product & Parts Quality Score	Product & Parts Quality % Change	Administrative Programs & Protocols Score	Administrative Programs & Protocols % Change
JCB	4.18	+6.23%	4.48	-1.21%	3.84	-8.55%
McCormick	4.25	+6.65%	4.96	+8.06%	3.33	-0.51%
Versatile	3.23	-15.78%	4.72	-3.87%	4.33	-12.39%

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence



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## Words from the Rising Stars

*Farm Equipment* received context from 2 of the 3 manufacturers who showed the most improvement — across every category in 2024.

**Rhino Ag.** Lisa Tubbs, president of RhinoAg LLC, described the mowing manufacturer's positive performance and improvement across all categories.

- **Product Innovation.** "We introduced new and enhanced products that better meet the needs of our dealers and end customers. These innovations include more efficient and durable machinery, which have been well received in the market."
- **Enhanced Dealer Support.** "We implemented a comprehensive dealer support program, which includes more frequent training sessions, better access to resources and a dedicated support team to address any issues promptly. This helped our dealers feel more confident and capable in selling and servicing our products."
- **Improved Supply Chain Management.** "We made significant strides in optimizing our supply chain to ensure timely delivery of products and parts. This has reduced downtime for our dealers and customers for improved satisfaction."
- **Customer Feedback Integration.** "We actively sought and incorporated feedback from our dealers and custom-

ers into our product development and service processes. This has led to better aligned products and services that meet the actual needs of the market."

- **Marketing & Brand Support.** "We increased our investment in marketing and brand support initiatives to drive more traffic to our dealers and improve brand recognition. This included both digital marketing efforts and participation in industry events."

**Highline Manufacturing.** Since 2006, Highline Manufacturing has been a wholly owned subsidiary of Bourgault Industries, also a perennial top performer in the NAEDA Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey. Bourgault also took the top rankings in 9 categories in 2024.

"There is no real silver bullet — we just continue to work at getting better at all aspects of our business every day," says Bob Cochran, director of Highline Manufacturing. "We believe that our relationships with our dealer partners are critical to our overall success. As part of that, we listen to their concerns and work to improve upon those things that are in our control.

"We are a relatively small team at Highline, which allows us to respond and react quickly if required to ensure the right things happen for our dealers and our customers."

(-7.21%), MacDon (-4.70%), Meyer Mfg. (-4.61%)

### 4. Manufacturer Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns

**Highest:** Bourgault (5.91), Meyer Mfg. (5.73), Vermeer (5.50)

**Trending Up:** Rhino (+8.37%), Bobcat (+4.66%), Kinze (+4.09%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (2.02), Bobcat (3.59), Kinze (4.33)

**Trending Down:** Gehl (-18.55%), Art's Way (-10.50%), Woods (-8.32%)

### 5. Product Technical Support

**Highest:** Bourgault (6.27), Meyer Mfg. (5.98), Vermeer (5.80)

**Trending Up:** Highline Mfg. (+6.94%), Rhino (+4.81%), Krone (+3.70%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (3.32), Bobcat (4.28), Art's Way (4.45)

**Trending Down:** Gehl (-10.77%), Art's Way (-7.68%), Meyer Mfg. (-5.68%)

### 6. Warranty Payments

**Highest:** Meyer Mfg. (5.59), Bourgault (5.55), Highline Mfg. (5.55)

**Trending Up:** Rhino (+5.19%), Bobcat (+4.80%), Highline Mfg. (+3.35%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (3.51), Bobcat (3.93), Bush Hog (4.16)

**Trending Down:** Bush Hog (-23.81%), Elmers Mfg. (-14.12%), Art's Way (-10.40%)

### 7. Product Availability

**Highest:** Bourgault (6.05), Degelman (5.96), Highline Mfg. (5.73)

**Trending Up:** Bobcat (+46.18%), Rhino (+29.60%), Kinze (+29.47%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (1.79), MacDon (3.92), Bobcat (4.78)

**Trending Down:** Elmers Mfg. (-3.32%).

### 8. Warranty Procedures

**Highest:** Meyer Mfg. (5.73), Land Pride (5.54), Highline Mfg. (5.52)

**Trending Up:** Rhino (+3.86%), Highline Mfg. (+3.56%), Krone (+2.61%)

**Lowest:** Bobcat (3.49), Gehl (3.55), Art's Way (4.55)

**Trending Down:** Elmers Mfg. (-9.79%), Degelman (-7.49%), Bush Hog (-6.96%)

### 9. Communications with Management

**Highest:** Bourgault (5.91), Meyer Mfg. (5.76), Vermeer (5.73)

**Trending Up:** Woods (+12.22%), Rhino (+5.72%), Highline Mfg. (+3.56%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (2.17), Bobcat (3.95),

Kinze (4.27)

**Trending Down:** Gehl (-18.42%), Art's Way (-9.89%), Meyer Mfg. (-8.43%)

### 10. Marketing & Advertising Support

**Highest:** Bourgault (6.05), Meyer Mfg. (5.59), Great Plains (5.59)

**Trending Up:** Highline Mfg. (+6.60%), Bourgault (+6.51%), Rhino (+4.73%)

**Lowest:** Gehl (2.87), Bobcat (4.55), Art's Way (4.64)

**Trending Down:** Gehl (-13.55%), Art's Way (-11.28%), Elmers Mfg. (-9.67%)

### 11. Return Privileges

**Highest:** Kinze (5.85), Bourgault (5.82), Meyer Mfg. (5.63)

**Trending Up:** Kinze (+24.73%), Highline Mfg. (+11.97%), Bourgault (+7.18%),

**Lowest:** Gehl (4.13), Bobcat (4.43), Art's Way (4.66)

**Trending Down:** Degelman (-7.92%), Elmers Mfg. (-6.75%), Art's Way (-5.86%) **FE**

## 2024 NAEDA Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Report

The 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Report is available to all NAEDA dealer members and to participating manufacturers. For information, contact Joe Dykes at [jdykes@equipmentdealer.org](mailto:jdykes@equipmentdealer.org)



# Keeping an Eye on Industrial Hemp

Hemp acreage has plummeted over the past 5 years, but there still is an active market with plenty of potential – and plenty of specialized equipment needs

By Gregg Wartgow, Contributing Writer

**W**hen the 2018 Farm Bill removed hemp from the controlled substance list, there was a lot of excitement over the potential of this “new” agricultural crop. Vote Hemp, a grassroots lobbying organization, even suggested that the land mass used to grow hemp could reach upward of 200,000 acres in 2019. They weren’t far off. Planted acreage reported to the USDA Farm Service Agency tallied up to 146,065 acres.

Then reality started to set in, as is sometimes the case when the excitement of an emerging market dies down.

## How to sell:

## HEMP EQUIPMENT

The USDA National Hemp Report released in April of this year shows that acreage had shrunk by 63% by 2021. Acreage decreased another 48% in 2022, followed by another small reduction in 2023 to a level of just 27,680 acres.

“Hemp CBD was the modern day gold rush in 2019,” says Sam Berthiaume, commercial sales at Champlain Valley Equipment with 5 locations in Vermont. The dealership’s equipment lines include Kubota, New Holland and Case IH, along with numerous shortlines including Orkel, which manufactures high-density baling equipment that’s well-suited to hemp. “The market got flooded so fast that growers almost couldn’t give the stuff away. A lot of guys walked away empty handed.”

Berthiaume grew up on a dairy farm. He was also one of the first farmers in Vermont to participate in hemp trials.

“I did 13 acres of industrial hemp (for fiber and grain) in 2017-18 on my cousin’s farm,” Berthiaume says. “We actually had a very successful crop. Then after 2018, I got together with some friends to start CBD farming. That’s when the market exploded and soon crashed. I switched gears and took a job at the dealership in December 2020.”



**CANN Crop Solutions provides equipment that can harvest every part of an industrial hemp plant. Its DoubleCut Combine (pictured) can harvest and separate a complete plant. “That gives the cleanest product streams possible, leading to higher-quality fiber, seed and leaves,” says Gerard Hosper, business development at CANN Crop Solutions.**

Hemp hopefuls like Berthiaume are optimistic that the market has stabilized. USDA data actually shows that a dozen states saw a rebound in hemp acreage in 2023, including California, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania and South Dakota. It’s a positive trend in an industry segment that could use some positivity.

## Is the Future in Fiber & Grain?

Another trend has emerged regarding what farmers are growing hemp for.

Initially in 2019, most of the hype was around CBD. Now, the number of acres harvested for fiber has grown 77% over the past couple of years. In fact, nearly half of the hemp acres harvested are for fiber now. Floral (CBD) is second at 30%, followed by grain and seed at 16% and 5%, respectively.

“I’ve been doing this for 30 years, and I believe the long-term prospect for this crop is around the fiber and grain,” says Eric Steenstra, president of Vote Hemp. “Hemp grain

## TAKEAWAYS

- The potential for hemp is still there, but growers need pre-established contracts with buyers and processors before assuming the risk.
- Farmers growing hemp for the grain may already have the necessary equipment, though hemp-specific seed discs (if using a regular planter) and draper heads on combines can provide an advantage.
- Farmers growing exclusively for fiber can benefit from unique cutting equipment to size the tall hemp stalks down, as well as baling equipment that can handle those stalks that have a tendency to twist and wrap.
- Farmers growing CBD hemp can benefit from having a transplanter to reduce the labor involved with planting, as well as specialized harvesting equipment.

## Top Hemp-Producing States

South Dakota	3,200 acres
Montana	2,900 acres
Oregon	2,300 acres
California	2100 acres
Missouri	1,750 acres
Colorado	1,350 acres
Kentucky	1,310 acres

SOURCE: USDA National Hemp Report, ISSN 2831-5545, released April 17, 2024, by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Agricultural Statistics Board. Acreage based on 2023 data.





**John Peterson uses an old Case IH 5130 combine to harvest industrial hemp grain.**

has huge potential as a food source for a variety of animals. Demand for seed oil is strong, too. As for hemp fiber, a huge driver is sustainable home construction for things like flooring.”

“I would love to see us stop using Chinese bamboo, and replace that with American-grown hemp,” says Ryan Given, product manager at ACI Distributors based in St. Charles, Mo., whose products include McHale hemp balers. “From what I’ve heard, hemp fiber can be a viable alternative for things like paper and other pressed materials. Hemp fiber is some wicked stuff.”

Vote Hemp thinks a redefining of hemp is an important step in encouraging farmers to begin increasing their hemp acreage again. Vote Hemp has actually launched a petition urging Congress to do just that.

“We need Congress to change the definition to allow up to 1% THC,” Steenstra says. “If a farmer is growing hemp for the fiber and grain, it’s pretty clear they aren’t after the flower and cannabinoid (THC, CBD). Farmers have enough risks already. We don’t want to see them have to destroy a crop because it’s slightly over the current limit of 0.3%. There has already been some legislation introduced, so I’m very hopeful the definition will change.”

South Dakota, which has become the top hemp-producing state in the country, minimized its own risk



**John Peterson uses a Bish FiberCut to cut tall industrial hemp stalks into several more manageable pieces.**

by not jumping the gun too early. Growers didn’t even start planting hemp until 2021 when 1,850 acres were planted. That acreage grew to around 3,200 by the end of 2023, a 73% increase over a 3-year period. And according to hemp grower and advocate John Peterson, hemp is overwhelmingly farmed for fiber.

“Growing for fiber is completely different than CBD,” says Peterson, owner

***You want to grow the hemp plant [for fiber] tall like bamboo, and then cut and bale it before it puts seed on. The challenge is that you don’t want to run too much long, fibrous material through a rapidly rotating machine...***

of Dakota Hemp in Wakonda, S.D., a company that farms hemp and uses it to develop hemp-based retail products. “A lot of the equipment that’s needed is already on a farm. So hemp is readily accepted by large-acre farmers already.” Peterson is also the secretary/treasurer of the South Dakota Industrial Hemp Assn. (SDIHA).

Another key to the sustained success in South Dakota is that farmers have a place to take their hemp bales. Ken Meyer, current president of the SDIHA and vice president of Complete Hemp Processing in Winfred, S.D., got his processing plant operational in 2023. Now Peterson is getting his own up and running.

“Before Ken and I decided to put our processing plants up, the closest

place for a farmer to take their bales was Montana or Kansas,” Peterson says. “Hauling round bales a thousand miles is not feasible to the pocketbook.”

Having reliable local processors they could sign contracts with gave South Dakota growers the confidence to start putting industrial hemp seed in the ground. It also helped that there was a reliable hemp seed salesman who was active in the state, Derrick Dohmann of Horizon Hemp Seeds. In other words, the horse has stayed ahead of the cart in South Dakota, allowing the industrial hemp industry to establish itself in a more sustainable way.

### **Equipment for Industrial Hemp**

When growing hemp for fiber, farmers often use a grain drill to plant seed, which Berthiaume can attest to. When he planted his 13 acres of industrial hemp back in 2018, he used a 7-inch grain drill. He taped off every other

hole to plant 14-inch rows.

Planters can also be used, though certain modifications may be necessary. For instance, Great Plains developed a specialized hemp seed disc for its PL Series and Yield-Pro

Planters. Industrial hemp seed can be difficult to accurately plant due to its unique shape and weight. Great Plains’ hemp seed disc has several design elements to achieve more precise seed placement, such as optimized hemp pockets, large-diameter wheels that rotate more slowly, and positive air metering for more uniform spacing.

Harvesting an industrial hemp plant can also present some challenges. When harvesting for both fiber and grain, where a grower will typically allow the plant to grow 5-8 feet tall, Peterson has been using a standard combine with large round-bar concaves. He sets it as high as it will go to clip off the top 1-2 feet of the plant to harvest the seed. Peterson has had success using a mid-size combine with



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a 30-foot conventional platform bean head set in the wheat position. He'll then come back later to chop and bale the remaining stalks.

When growing hemp for fiber (stalks) only, harvesting can get interesting.

"You want to grow the hemp plant tall like bamboo, and then cut and bale it before it puts seed on," Peterson explains. "The challenge is that you don't want to run too much long, fibrous material through a rapidly rotating machine. Larger combines

can swallow a lot more, which helps. But the hemp plant is still roughly 25% moisture when you're harvesting it, so you have to be careful."

Peterson has been using a specialized piece of cutting equipment from Bish Enterprises called the FiberCut. "It's a four-bar sickle bar cutter," Peterson says. "Some fiber stalks can end up being 15 feet tall. Cutting them into four smaller sections allows them to lie on the ground better for faster drying, retting and handling. I don't care what kind of baler you have, it's probably not going to handle a 15-foot input."

This is especially the case with a plant like hemp that has a tendency to twist and wrap. To that point, Peterson says growers can also run into issues when raking.

"I've had good luck using rotary rakes (tedder style)

so far," Peterson relates. "The open-wheel rake is where farmers sometimes run into issues. We typically recommend putting plastic shields on the rake wheels, or running closed-wheel rakes. That will help keep those stalks from getting wedged in there."

The same considerations must be made when attempting to bale hemp stalks. According to Given, experienced hemp growers do not go into harvest with the same baler they've been using for hay.

"At a bare minimum, you want a silage baler," Given says. "The properties that make hemp a good fiber are the same properties that make it want to twist and wrap. With a silage baler, you'll have some kind of scrapers designed to minimize buildup around the rollers."

McHale balers, Given points out, are built for handling silage. They have cleaning augers on the rollers and wear parts on essentially every area that touches the crop, which is important because hemp is also very abrasive. Then, McHale offers what it calls a baler hemp kit.

"You're basically taking a 7-foot pickup and turning it into a 4-foot pickup by deleting the outer tines," Given explains, adding that when a baler plugs, it's usually around the corners, edges and feed augers. By removing those outer tines, you're reducing the amount of crop that can be pulled into those problem areas. "That hemp will still wrap, but you're extending the time when you'll need to pull the machine down, take the stripper bands off, and start cutting hemp out of it," Given adds.

### Equipment for CBD Hemp

When growing CBD hemp, farmers are after the flowers. This requires a different approach to planting.

***I've been doing this 30 years, and I believe the long-term prospect for this crop is around the fiber and grain...***



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“You need strict seed control in order for the plant to make the proper flower for CBD,” explains Dan Timmer, owner of Mechanical Transplanter Co. (MTC). “You need feminized seed. If you end up with too many males in the field, it can ruin the whole crop. A grower is able to weed out those males in a greenhouse before taking them out to plant. Hemp seed is too expensive to throw a bunch of seed in the ground and hope it comes up female.”

Timmer is starting to see signs of a resurgence in the CBD segment of the market, albeit in a much smaller way than in 2019. Growers are being far more cautious now, often planting smaller fields of 1-5 acres.

Still, Timmer says a transplanter implement can be a smart investment, even in these smaller applications. Compared to planting completely by hand, which some smaller CBD growers do, a transplanter will help save a considerable amount of backbreaking time. Labor cost savings could offset the price of a transplanter in just a season or two.

MTC manufactures both bare-ground transplanters and machines that plant through plastic mulch. Plastic mulch is popular because it helps with

MARCO MFG. CO.



**The Powell 6031 Hemp Harvester cuts CBD hemp plants at near ground level, and then properly orients them and sends them up a conveyor to a wagon or trailer pulled alongside the tractor-drawn harvester.**

weed suppression. “CBD hemp growers want bigger plants and much wider spacing,” Timmer points out. “Some of

MECHANICAL TRANSPLANTER CO.



**Mechanical Transplanter Co. offers carousel- and finger-style transplanters for planting CBD hemp in bare ground or plastic mulch/film. Pictured here is the Model 948 Mulch Transplanter.**

through plastic mulch, transplanters are hand-fed so they still require human labor. It’s important for a dealer to de-

velop an understanding of the farmer’s needs, as well as their experience using farm equipment in general. Many CBD hemp growers are not typical farm equipment operators.

Timmer says finger-style machines are simple and versatile. “They can handle a wide range of plug sizes, and can also do bare-root plants like onions, strawberries and sweet potatoes if a grower is also going to work with those types of crops,” Timmer says. “Finger-style transplanters

require two people per row. A carousel-style machine is much faster and requires just one person per row. But carousel-style machines cost more and require the operator to be a bit more mechanically inclined.”

“In choosing a transplanter, a grower should consider speed, quality and versatility,” says Cameron Hill, director of North America at Global Ag Company, which specializes in Italian farm equipment including Checchi & Magli transplanters. “Is there a possibility the grower may want to plant in plastic and bare ground, and maybe even direct seed sometimes? Our Wolf Pro with SeedPro can do it all in one machine.” On the other hand, Hill adds, a faster carousel-style machine is a better choice if a grower is only looking to plant on bare ground.

Like planting, harvesting flowers from a CBD hemp plant is also sometimes done by hand. Combines with modified pickup headers can also work.

***The reality is, hemp can be a really good crop that gives farmers another way to make some extra income ... Growers just need to be growing it the right way and for the right reasons...***

these CBD hemp fields end up looking like Christmas tree fields.”

Whether planting on bare ground or



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**HY-Reaper processing systems can be configured to process full hemp plants from the field to aid in separation prior to the drying or extraction processes. Available in either stationary or mobile versions, these systems are designed to provide gentle handling and clean cutting to preserve final product quality.**

There is also specialty equipment for harvesting CBD hemp.

"Our hemp harvester costs around \$40,000," says Tom Pharr, president of MarCo Mfg. Co., maker of the Powell Hemp Harvester. "We generally say a grower needs around 25 acres to realize a reasonable return. On 25 acres, a grower should save enough on labor to pay for our machine within 5 years."

The Powell 6031 Hemp Harvester is designed to cut the stalk at near ground level, orient the stalk perpendicular to the direction of travel, and positively convey it by a special gripper chain to a wagon or trailer pulled alongside the harvester. The self-contained hydraulic system is powered by the PTO of the

tractor carrying the harvester.

Powell was long known for its tobacco harvesters when some farmers asked Pharr if they would work with hemp. The tobacco harvesters did an OK job, but it became clear that modifications were needed in order to efficiently harvest hemp.

"The biggest thing was making the harvester easier to transport," Pharr says. "A lot of these CBD growers are working smaller fields and need a harvester that's easy to transport from field to field. We also had to make some changes on the head and conveyor system to hold the plant a little better. Lead-ins were changed to better pull the plant in. A hemp plant is much smaller than a tobacco plant, so trying to get it stable in the harvesting system

took a little bit of work. Our system has been working well ever since, and no other significant modifications have been needed since we were first figuring all of this out back in 2019."

It has been a volatile market since hemp first exploded out of the gate in 2019. But the industry is showing signs of stabilization, and is offering opportunities to growers in the right circumstances where processors and equipment dealers are set up to support them.

"What happened to the hemp market may actually turn out to be a good thing," Berthiaume says. "The quick crash helped weed out a lot of people who didn't know what they were doing and were in it for the wrong reasons. The reality is, hemp can be a really good crop that gives farmers another way to make some extra income. Hemp also helps clean the soil to improve soil health, which is good for everything. So there are a lot of benefits and a lot of opportunity. Growers just need to be growing hemp the right way and for the right reasons." **FE**



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# 2024 EXECUTIVE STATEMENTS

**O**n behalf of the editorial team, we're pleased to bring you these Executive Statements from across the ag equipment industry — a special compilation you can turn to time and again as you evaluate your many choices in our vibrant agricultural equipment industry.

This unique compilation is intended to help you better “get to know” 29 of our industry's key suppliers who continue to help our industry advance. As you'll see, we've assembled a unique collection of both household names as well as some “up-and-comers” to watch.

You'll find these Executive Statements useful, not only as a primer on current and potential business partners and what they can offer you as a dealer, but also to gain perspective on company “bloodlines” and the foundation from which they're built. As our readers have told us, all of this is helpful to understanding the type of relationship you can expect by partnering with these suppliers.

We hope you find this compilation as interesting as we did in pulling it together for you. **FE**

— **Kim Schmidt, Executive Editor**  
[kschmidt@lessitermedia.com](mailto:kschmidt@lessitermedia.com)



## Resilience of Our People: A&I Products

**A**&I Products continues to be the leading solution for you as a lower cost, quality supplier of replacement parts for all makes and models of ag, turf and industrial equipment. There is a proven true testament to the resilience of our people.

A&I Products' hometown of Rock Valley, Iowa, saw record flooding in July 2024. This disastrous flood surpassed the previous record by 5 feet, nearly 12 feet above flood stage. Though the waters did not reach the



A&I office, warehouse or manufacturing facility, the impact on the community and A&I Products employees has been significant. As of writing, it is estimated 540 homes were significantly impacted. As many as 120 homes are a complete loss. More than 1,500 people have been displaced, around 35% of the population of this small agricultural town nestled in Northwest Iowa.

Through this event, A&I Products was able to continue to operate with limited staff and worked diligently to support our dealers and resellers with products, returning to normal capacity on July 8. The volunteer efforts and support from offsite employees and field team members were pivotal in this time. For all of A&I's valued dealers and resellers, we hope you were able to bear with us during the time we needed to operate with limited staff. In times like this, our people have been our priority, and Rock Valley will be back stronger than before.

— **Nate Regnerus,**  
**Marketing Manager, A&I Products**



## Meet Vi: Your Dealership's AI Service Assistant

Introducing Vi by visorPRO®, the AI-powered equipment service assistant of choice. visorPRO is transforming how dealerships leverage knowledge to serve their customers. Amid increasing economic pressures, AI strategy is critical to achieve higher margins within dealership operations.



visorPRO's service assistant, Vi, helps service teams plan jobs with confidence and execute on them efficiently. Valuable time is saved for technicians, and front-line staff can answer customer questions within the first interaction. With visorPRO, dealers are achieving better training outcomes for new team members, improving their job mastery and overall work satisfaction. visorPRO's "dealer brain" is quickly becoming a valuable knowledge asset for dealerships. This enables dealers to unlock value from their service history, elevate their customer care and create more consistency across their complex.

With the recent addition of John Schmeiser to the leadership team, visorPRO is forging ahead with building deep connections in the dealer community. John brings a wealth of expertise to visorPRO, having recently served as the president and chief operating officer of the North American Equipment Dealers Assn. (NAEDA). His depth of industry expertise will further enhance the mission to increase profitability and decrease burnout in dealership operations.

As dealers navigate today's competitive market, the strategic implementation of AI tools is crucial. Committed to a dealer-centric approach, visorPRO not only puts dealers' AI strategy into their own hands, independent of their OEMs, but also prides itself on being shortline friendly, ensuring access to all equipment lines. Dealers are leveraging their institutional data today to create a competitive advantage.

Ready to see how visorPRO can work in your dealership? Book a demo with Vi today!



— **John Schmeiser, Industry Consultant (left)**  
**Robert Saik, Founder & CEO (center)**  
**Brock Moir, CPO (right)**



## RhinoAg Invests in New Products & Markets

RhinoAg is one company with two excellent brands; Rhino and Dixie Chopper. Our businesses have seen extraordinary change in the last five years since the acquisition of Dixie Chopper in August 2019.

We have expanded our product portfolio for both businesses substantially in the last couple years. On the Rhino side of the business, we've introduced the 4125, a brand-new 12.5-foot heavy-duty flex-wing capable of cutting materials up to 4-inches in diameter. This product is perfect for the most demanding rural property management, orchards, commercial application and roadside maintenance.

We are also expanding our customer reach into new markets including golf, turf and sod. We introduced our new X Series, a range of gear-driven

roller mower products. Our X Series includes rigid deck implements of 6- and 8-feet, and a diverse selection of wide area rotary mowers featuring a 10-, 14-, 18-, 20- and 24-foot options. For the turf managers who maintain areas with anything but flat grass, we have introduced the R Series. The R126 is a contouring roller mower perfect for uneven terrain. The X-Blade cutting system on these mowers provides precise cut-quality by using 4 blades per rotor.

The RhinoAg sales team is heavily focused on adding new dealers to our excellent network of dealers and joining the family. We believe we offer a truly impressive product line, high-quality service from our sales and customer care teams, and unmatched access to the company's key executives. For more information on becoming a new dealer, please scan the QR code, or visit our website at [www.rhinoag.com/become-a-dealer](http://www.rhinoag.com/become-a-dealer).

— **Lisa Tubbs, President, RhinoAg**





## The Benefits of Associated Equipment Distributors (AED) Membership

**A**s president & CEO of Associated Equipment Distributors (AED), I am proud to highlight the significant benefits of AED membership. Since 1919, AED has supported companies involved in the sale, service, rental and support of equipment across industries including agriculture, construction, mining, forestry, power generation and industrial applications.

AED members gain access to a wealth of resources designed to enhance success and profitability. Our services include:

- **Industry Education & Career Development:** We offer comprehensive education programs, from leadership development to technical training, equipping your workforce to meet today's competitive challenges.
- **Industry Research & Analysis:** Members receive exclusive access to in-depth research and market analysis, providing insights that help you make informed decisions and stay ahead of the competition.
- **Networking & Conferences:** AED organizes events that connect industry leaders, decision-makers and innovators, offering opportunities to forge valuable connections and explore new business opportunities.
- **Public Policy Advocacy:** AED is your voice in Washington, D.C., ensuring your interests are represented in legislative and regulatory discussions that impact your business.

Joining AED means becoming part of a dynamic community of industry professionals dedicated to excellence and continuous improvement. Together, we are shaping the future of the equipment industry and ensuring our members thrive in an ever-changing global marketplace.

— **Brian P McGuire,**  
**President & CEO,**  
**Associated**  
**Equipment**  
**Distributors**



## AW Dynamometer Introduces Two New High-Tech Products

**A**W Dynamometer recently received a U.S. Patent for a PTO Dynamometer featuring a totally new design — a dual quad power stator. This design maximizes the coefficient of friction at the kinetic point of energy by utilizing a stator consisting of 8 torque pistons (dual quad) equally spaced over the length of a rotor and

applying uniform pressure to a hydraulic pressure equalizer plate. The amount of pressure applied by the stator to the rotor is the same over all the area of the rotor resulting in increased torque while running smoothly. The new dual quad stator is housed in a large single drum making this dynamometer very efficient. Tests done at an outside facility resulted in powerful findings

of 6,000 foot-pounds of torque at 1,000 rpm yielding 1,150 horsepower. AW uses its' electronic computerized load system to control rpm and horsepower. This system allows the operator a wide variety of power set points and the ability to control the load from the cab of the tractor.

The new dynamometer will be the highest horsepower PTO dyno on the market and is named the AG.MAX.

AW recently launched a new product to test implements, combines, planters, and more — the "Virtual Tractor." The model VT.1X features a 10 hp electric motor powering a 3,000 psi hydraulic system with PTO and 6 sets of quick disconnect hydraulic couplers, an ISOBUS 11783-2 system with an independent 60 amp power supply and a SAE J560 light test system. All of the systems are remotely controlled by an HMI touch screen tablet "The Commander" using a powerful Wi-Fi system with over a 100-foot control radius. The VT.1X has successfully tested John Deere S Series combines at low and high speeds along with other tests of implements. The operator has direct control of increasing or decreasing an RPM set point. The new product will be the most advanced system on the market.

— **Del Robinson, President, AW Dynamometer Inc.**  
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## Innovating for the Farm of the Future

**E**merging technology is revolutionizing the compact equipment industry and transforming the way work is accomplished.

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Bobcat MaxControl allows for remote operation of a compatible loader using an app on an iOS device. This remote operating system allows for two-person jobs to be handled by one person.

### 2. Alternative Energy

Producing no emissions, electric machines can tackle tough jobs on environmentally sensitive worksites or indoor applications — like in a dairy barn — where exhaust is restricted.

Alternative energy solutions will continue to be developed alongside advancements in diesel-power technology. As long as customers have varying needs, manufacturers will develop a variety of solutions.

### 3. Autonomy

As technology progresses, fleet owners can take advantage of autonomous equipment to complete repetitive tasks while reserving



skilled operators for more complex tasks. Bobcat is piloting an autonomous zero-turn mower concept, perfect for mowing acres around the farm.

Bobcat recently introduced its concept collision warning and avoidance system to assist operators' worksite awareness. The technology tracks an objects' position, direction and speed relative to the machine.

More than ever, customers expect emerging technology to enhance productivity and efficiency. Bobcat is committed to innovating today for the farm or worksite of tomorrow.

— **Joel Honeyman,**  
**Vice President of Global**  
**Innovation, Doosan Bobcat**

## Haul Ag Equipment Your Way

**T**he Brandt H450 heavy haul trailer is customizable so you can haul equipment easier.

Today's ag equipment is larger, heavier and longer, and when hauling it, safety and efficiency are crucial. You need to know your trailer will move the equipment without failing, but hiring out larger loads for hauling can get costly.

Brandt tackles these concerns head on with their H450 Heavy Haul trailer. You can customize this trailer to suit all your needs. Adjust well space, add rear winches and more — whatever you need to safely haul your ag equipment.

The H450 is renowned for its safety and toughness. It has load securement everywhere you need it. The suspension and deck interface are formed instead of welded, giving maximum durability.

**Brandt**

This is a trailer you can trust for the long haul.

Tyson Anderson, owner and president of Valley Equipment and Irrigation in Blackfoot, Idaho, pictured, chose the H450 for these reasons.

Anderson, who is also a Brandt Agriculture dealer, says, "Their equipment is built to last, and Brandt has always been there when we've needed them."

He particularly appreciates the H450's ease of use. "Just about anybody, even if they're unfamiliar with the trailer, can unhook it and hook it up really simply and easily," Anderson adds.

If the trailer itself isn't reason enough to buy, Brandt also offers flexible, low-rate financing and the fastest delivery in the business, making it easier to get you the trailer you need.

For more information about the H450 and how it can help your dealership, contact Brandt today.

— **Brandt Industries**  
**USA Limited,**  
**Heavy Haul**  
**Trailers**





## Busatis, Your Expert Partner for High-Performance Cutting Components

For over 135 years, we have been your expert partner for mowing and cutting technology in agriculture, construction and forestry. This tradition forms the basis of our innovation, which dates back to when Busatis was founded in 1888 in Purgstall, Austria.

Made from the toughest materials on earth, we create high-performance cutting components and hardfacing

technologies for your professional use. Our core area of expertise involves technologies for wear-protection coatings (as Busa®CLAD or BusaDUR®), partial heat treatment, cold and hot working, punching processes, grinding and mechanical machining on CNC centers.

We have been developing and innovating these coating technologies against abrasion, erosion and impact



stress for more than 40 years, enabling solutions by customer request for wear parts used in high-performance machinery.

Busatis is a full-range manufacturer. Production processes and coating technologies are performed in-house. We provide cutting and wear parts for self-propelled forage harvesters, combines, balers, feed mixers, cultivators and self-loading wagons.

We pride ourselves on our historic company culture, continuing a voluntary com-

pany fire brigade since 1940, a company orchestra since 1935 and an apprenticeship program in Austria. For the last several years, we have had a number of Busatis apprentices complete the program with distinction and be honored at Lower Austria's annual celebration.

Our North American distribution facility, Busatis Inc. is located in Montgomery, Ill.

Please visit our website [www.busatis.com](http://www.busatis.com), or scan the QR code to learn more.



— **Stephen S. Peck**  
President, Busatis Inc.

## Delivering Exceptional Performance & Reliability in Demanding Conditions

Bush Hog proudly introduces the new 3112 12-foot Flex-Wing mower. This versatile, heavy-duty machine continues the legacy of our larger commercial-grade Flex-Wings, engineered to handle a wide range of tasks. Whether it's routine pasture and orchard mowing or challenging roadside maintenance, the 3112 is built to cut heavy grasses and brush up to 3 ½ inches in diameter, making it ideal for virtually any mowing environment.

Rob Jarman, Bush Hog product manager, underscores the mower's strengths: "The 3112 continues our tradition of excellence, taking design cues from our 4115 model. It's specifically crafted to deliver outstanding performance and reliability in the toughest conditions."

Emphasizing durability and cutting precision, the



IF IT DOESN'T SAY  
**BUSH  
HOG**  
IT JUST WON'T CUT IT

3112 boasts a robust construction with 10-gauge decks, ¼-inch sidebands, 7-gauge round blade pans, and ½-inch x 4-inch blades featuring an 8-inch overlap. These features ensure superior cut quality and longevity. The mower's dual EZ-adjust leveling rods and ½-inch thick replaceable cast wing skids enhance durability, while custom shock-absorbing isolators in each axle arm provide smoother operation and reduce shock loads, contributing to a more comfortable experience for operators.

Standard features like the Adjustable Driveline Assist for easier PTO attachment, the Perma-Level+ Hitch for simplified drawbar hookups, and ergonomic aluminum hydraulic hose handles further enhance the 3112's reliability and user-friendliness.

"Proudly made in the USA, our 3112 Flex-Wing comes with a 10-year gearbox limited warranty, ensuring that this mower meets your toughest demands with lasting performance and peace of mind," Jarman concluded.

— **Rob Jarman**,  
Product Manager, Bush Hog





## Strong Dealer & Customer Connections Support Diversified Sales Strategy

I know I'm biased, but I believe CLAAS has the best dealers in the industry. Many of them have grown up alongside us. As our product line has expanded from hay and forage equipment to combines and now tractors, lots of dealers have expanded their businesses to accommodate the new opportunities we've been able to provide.

Due to the diverse range of dealerships in the channel, there tends to be overlap. Dealers who sell hay and forage



equipment, may not sell combines. Some sell tractors, while others do not.

It's not the way anyone drew it up, but it comes in handy when there is any sort of dealer turnover.

We lean heavily on our third-party distribution partners to provide our customers with what they need. Case in point: When Ohio Ag Equipment opted out of the ag equipment business, CLAAS was able to fill in with 5 nearby dealers by expanding their lines or expanding their territories. While the dealers required some impromptu technical training and expedited parts deliveries, the CLAAS dealer network was more than ready to handle this fast transition.

Even when Ziegler parted ways with CLAAS, an agreement was made to continue to provide parts and services while CLAAS established new dealerships. We've also been working through existing dealer relationships in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa to have machines on the ground. Through a recently established third FARM-POINT™ location in Le Mars, Iowa, CLAAS was able to add combines in western Iowa to help fill in.

We go to great lengths to take care of customers, not only the end users, but our dealers. We know where every machine is located down to the address, and we try to coordinate a time of response from when a customer calls in to how soon we can have parts or service to their location. We ensure our team arrives within a reasonable amount of time and takes care of a problem the customer might have. In anticipation, we will place parts boxes at farmers' locations, and through our dealers or through us, we will do inventories, restocks and seasonal payment plans.

It's less about integrating people into your culture; it's having a culture that brings all those people along, and creating something people believe in, that they're excited to get up in the morning and get to work. At the end of the day, we hire great people and great dealers and get out of their way.

— **Eric Raby, Senior Vice President — Americas Region, CLAAS**

## Cummins: A Trusted Name in Agriculture for Over 100 years

Since 1919 Cummins has been powering agriculture. With nearly one million Cummins engines sold into agricultural machines across the world. From the farm to the field, to the future Cummins delivers the right power for your farm.

We are acutely aware of the increasing demand global agriculture will face and what that means for farmers. In



pursuit of these challenges in agriculture and other markets, Cummins is making unprecedented investments in research and development, fostering in-house component technologies such as turbocharging, air-handling, combustion, electronic controls, filtration and exhaust aftertreatment. This concerted

effort ensures that Cummins provides the right power solution, engineered and integrated specifically for each unique application.

We've worked to ensure this research goes into providing the right power solutions for farmers. The L9 Harvest engine and F4.5 engine are examples of two Cummins solutions which are designed specifically for combine harvesters and small to medium tractors respectively. As part of the Performance Series range, these engines do more with less, offering higher power output and torque for improved machine capability in a smaller, lighter package that is cheaper to run than larger equivalents.

We are excited to have products that are designed specifically for agriculture. As part of our broad Performance Series engine range, they deliver more machine capability and substantial productivity benefits for farmers who operate Cummins powered equipment. To learn more about Cummins engines for Agriculture applications, please visit [www.cummins.com/agriculture](http://www.cummins.com/agriculture).

— **Philip Dawson,  
General Manager,  
Global Ag  
Business,  
Cummins**





## Collaboration Yields Tremendous Results in New Deep Tillage Line

Our goal at Degelman when it comes to designing equipment is to innovate rather than imitate, so we continue to collaborate with several of our most influential customers, dealers and team members to focus on the performance of our industry leading high performance tillage products.

During these conversations with growers, especially in high tillage areas in the United States, two things became clear. As equipment has increased in size and weight, so has the soil compaction issues robbing farmers of yield.

As we dove deeper into the negative side effects because of soil compaction, we found that there was a real

lack of high-performance deep tillage options for our customers. Because of this, we set out

to develop what would become the HDSR Series of Heavy Duty Staggered Rippers.

The HDSR features a staggered two-row layout. We found that a staggered row setup features better trash flow and lower draft than an in-line ripper. It also offers a shorter implement contour length, easier transport, and better compaction shattering ability than a V-ripper.

We are excited to launch two categories within the HDSR Series in 2024.

A large-wing machine compatible with 15 shanks on 20-inch spacing, or 11 shanks on 30-inch spacing and a mid-wing machine compatible with 13 shanks on 20-inch spacing, or 9 shanks on 30-inch spacing. Sizes range from 22- to 27-foot 5-inches.

Built and designed in a truly unique Degelman way, we think that the HDSR Series of Staggered Rippers will be a game changer for your farming operation.

— **Derek Molnar,**  
**Director of Marketing, Degelman**



## Dixie Chopper Expands Product Portfolio

Dixie Chopper is proud to be part of RhinoAg and the Alamo Group family of businesses. Since the acquisition by RhinoAg in 2019, we continue to invest in our core product line of high-quality zero-turn mowers, but always looking for new markets for our dealers to sell into. Our two new products; the Talon RC and Talon MS are gaining popularity and attention in the market.

The Talon RC is a remote-controlled hillside mower capable of mowing inclines up to 55 degrees to provide a safer mowing solution to operators who need to maintain terrain that would be impossible with zero-turn mowers or tractor mounted implements. The bi-directional cutting deck improves operator efficiency and reduces turf damage. The Talon MS is a heavy-duty mini-skid-steer with a wide array of industry applications including commercial landscapers, municipalities, forestry, irrigation, and more. The Talon MS features an expandable track to allow the operator to contract the tracks to 34.5-inches to fit through narrow areas including gates, and the ability to expand the tracks for greater stability in operation.

**DIXIE CHOPPER®**  
**The World's Fastest Lawn Mower®**



The Dixie Chopper sales team is heavily focused on adding new dealers to our excellent network of dealers and joining the family. We believe we offer a truly impressive product line for both brands, high-quality service from our sales and customer care teams, and unmatched access to the company's

key executives. For more information on becoming a new dealer, please scan the QR code, or visit our website at [www.dixiechopper.com/become-a-dealer](http://www.dixiechopper.com/become-a-dealer).

— **Adam Smith,**  
**National Sales Manager, Dixie Chopper**





## Building Strong Dealer Partnerships One Mower at a Time

**G**reat dealers and great dealer partnerships are the backbone of Mean Green. Since 2009, Mean Green has been 100% focused on building the best commercial-grade electric mowers available while cultivating solid partnerships with dealers nationwide. We actively partner with our dealer network to provide their commercial customers with the best sales and service experience possible. This past year, we expanded our reach and resources through strategic partnerships with three of North America's most prolific OEM distributors, CADCO, Oscar-Wilson and Equipments ESF. We are proud to offer our full range of products to more dealers in more places while ensuring that all our dealers have access to the industry's best support and highest level of service.

In addition to expanding Mean Green's dealer network, we introduced the EVO 96, the world's largest electric zero-turn mower. This innovative commercial machine boasts an available 44 kWh battery capable of continuous mowing for up to 8 hours and a massive 96" deck that folds up to 72.5-inches so for easy trailering to and from any job site. The EVO 96 also hosts the same patented technology featured in all our commercial mowers, including our patented Heavy-Duty Impulse Drive System™, SmartDeck™ controls, and patented battery location for unparalleled hillside stability.



Our dedication to serving our dealer partners and drive for innovation in commercial electric mowing have always set Mean Green apart from the competition. To learn more about becoming a Mean Green dealer, visit [www.mean-greenproducts.com/become-a-dealer](http://www.mean-greenproducts.com/become-a-dealer).

— **Mike Hoban,**  
**Vice President —**  
**Sales &**  
**Distribution,**  
**Mean Green**  
**Mowers**



## Strategic Expansion Through Rebuilding & Innovation

**D**uo Lift Manufacturing, a leader in agricultural and fertilizer trailer innovation, is built on a legacy grounded in dependability and practicality that aligns with the evolving needs of today's agricultural and commercial operators. Our extensive network of sales distributors and representatives spans the continental U.S. and Canada, ensuring that our solutions are readily accessible to our valued customers.



As we look ahead to 2025, Duo Lift is focused on strategic expansion. We are excited to announce the addition of a new 15,000-square-foot fabrication facility expansion, which features advanced state-of-art laser technology to enhance manufacturing efficiency and a new cold storage area. This expansion project overshadows recent challenges we've faced as a business, including the significant damage to our main office building earlier this year. Our commitment to rebuilding and advancing our operations highlights our dedication to continuous improvement.

In line with our growth strategy, we are thrilled to introduce the LA1750 Liquid Applicator, a groundbreaking addition to the liquid applicator market for 2025. The LA1750 features an innovative design that facilitates efficient and effortless liquid fertilizer application. Its versatile design with a high lift toolbar expands the window for side-dress application, promoting healthy crop growth and optimizing production.

Furthermore, we are proud to unveil the new Duo Lift ST2-68K-SSA and ST3-80K-SSA Step Deck Semi Liquid Tender Trailers. These models are engineered for precise towing, versatile configurations and enhanced safety. Built to be heavy-duty and road-ready, the ST2-68K-SSA and ST3-80K-SSA offer robust liquid transport capabilities. The step deck design accommodates multiple tank configurations and plumbing options. Safety features, including bottom deck stairway access, come standard to ensure secure and efficient operation.

Duo Lift remains committed to delivering innovative solutions that meet the highest standards of performance and safety. As we expand our capabilities and product offerings, we look forward to continuing our partnership with the agricultural community and contributing to our customers success.

— **Ben Hellbusch, Co-Owner, Duo Lift Mfg. Co. Inc.**





## Cover Replacement Needs with Creative Financing

In today's farm machinery market, high interest rates, increased input costs and lower commodity prices are contributing to one consistent theme: farmers are sharpening their pencils on payments as they plan for

equipment purchases.

Across the country, many producers are carefully evaluating the cost-effectiveness of repairing existing equipment versus upgrading to newer models. Interest rates have stabilized; however, some producers are opting to delay trade-ins to preserve lower rates on equipment they have financed over the last 3-5 years.

Regionally, there have been

fewer cash buyers in parts of the Midwest in response to declining commodity prices. In other areas, such as the Great Lakes, there's been a shift toward more cash purchases and a slight uptick in leasing activity as tightening margins put pressure on profitability.

Creative financing will be key to lowering payments and providing a little bit of rate relief. Leasing products, longer financing terms and other financing strategies will play a much bigger role in equipment sales going forward; and dealers and equipment lenders will continue to be an important source in helping customers cover their replacement needs.

As a nationwide equipment financing program, AgDirect is acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities equipment dealers and ag producers are navigating. With our knowledge and dedication to serving agriculture, both can be confident in AgDirect as a trusted financial partner.

— **Brian Legried, Senior VP, AgDirect**

*AgDirect is an equipment financing program offered by Farm Credit Services of America and other lenders, including participating Farm Credit System Institutions.*



## FEMA — A Resource & Advocate

For nearly 75 years, the *Farm Equipment Manufacturers Assn.* has provided farm implement industry leadership to enhance business opportunities and profitability for its growing 700 member companies in the U.S. and Canada.

We serve as a resource and advocate for the shortline farm equipment industry. The association represents manufacturers of specialized agricultural equipment, their

suppliers and their distributors. Led by a 16-person Board of Directors, the association maintains member



companies representing each link in the farm equipment supply chain: manufacturers, providers of component parts and services to those manufacturers and equipment marketers.

From large corporations to small multi-generational, family-owned businesses, we understand the distinct needs of this niche group and work hard to support you as dealers so you can do what you do best: bring choice, value and innovation to agriculture. We provide a forum for marketing equipment through networking, communications and technology by creating opportunities for members to connect and learn from one another. Our Dealer Relations Committee works to better understand the needs of the dealers and how we can improve our relationship with them.

Each spring our manufacturing members meet with current or potential suppliers to offer unique opportunities to build business relationships.

Meanwhile, each fall, our manufacturing members meet with marketers and wholesalers in conjunction with the Equipment Marketer and Distribution Assn. to have members meet with companies that will help market their products.

Our success is driven by keeping our members informed on the news that matters most, providing customized educational opportunities at conventions and building a body of exclusive and essential information online.

— **Randy Reinke, President, FEMA**





## A Business Built on Relationships

**G**BGI Inc. was founded 30 years ago. The basics boil down to providing shortline tillage and seeding equipment manufacturers with a better solution to fit their needs.

GBGI prides itself in manufacturing cast products 100% in the U.S. and assembling at our facility giving our customers a superior design that eliminates variables that cause costly downtime in the field.



Our business is built on relationships and working together with our customers to provide them with

a superior solution. We have now taken this concept to aftermarket for Precision Planting Premier dealers focusing solely on the wear parts for planter row units.

All designs are engineered in house and beta tested closely with our dealers across the country giving us the data needed to manufacture products that take care of major wear points growers must typically deal with while in the heat of planting season.

We have grown the dealer networks from a few to a couple hundred.

We are proud to work with dealers such as Planting Solutions and Jay Horst in Leola, Pa., bringing new products to market and increasing growers ROI thru Precision Planting. It is this relationship that has given GBGI growth and would not be possible without our OEMs and dealer network. We greatly appreciate their business.

— **Peter Casamento, President, GBGI Inc.**



## Oxbo and H&S: A Year of Transformation and Innovation

**T**he past year has been a thrilling year of transformation for the H&S brand. In June 2023, Oxbo acquired H&S, bolstering its capacity to cater to the dairy and forage sectors. The Marshfield, Wis., facility now operates as the Oxbo Forage Division, proudly manufacturing both Oxbo and H&S brands.

Today, as the Oxbo Forage division, we're at the forefront of cutting-edge agricultural technologies.

This past year, we have released the H&S PS6138 PowerSpread.

This is the newest model in our series of Live bottom / Vertical Beater manure spreaders. As with all



of our vertical beater spreaders, it has our patented reverse flighting to give you the best spread pattern possible.

In addition, we have also released the H&S UF6136 36-foot Merger, featuring the largest head pickup and largest belt size in the industry. With its patented soft shoe technology and steering system, this is the merger you have been waiting for.

We look forward to the future and will remain committed to designing and building the most robust and reliable farm equipment tailored to farms of all sizes.

— **Craig Harthoorn,**  
**President, Oxbo Forage Division**





## Help Your Customers Thrive, Become a JLG Agriculture Dealer

In the heart of American agriculture, where the land represents generations of hard work, helping hands are making a positive impact.

Farmers and ranchers need reliable equipment to keep their operations thriving, and JLG Agriculture is proud to support their work. An Oshkosh Corp. business, JLG Ag Telehandlers are designed, built and supported in the U.S.

Born from a legacy of innovation and crafted with precision, JLG's Ag Telehandlers are the ultimate tools for any job.

But our telehandlers are not just machines; they are the extra set of hands needed on the farm. Designed to transform the way farmers and ranchers handle a wide range of tasks; our equipment is saving valuable time and increasing productivity.

To cover more acres, we're building a nationwide dealer network. Our telehandlers are designed to meet and exceed the diverse needs of any agricultural operation and we're looking for the same characteristics in our dealers.

As our dealer network expands, we invite you to be part of this growing legacy. By joining the JLG family, you'll not only offer your customers top-tier equipment but also stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the farmers and ranchers who keep our country running.

With JLG Ag Telehandlers, we'll elevate productivity and enrich lives, one farm at a time. Partner with us and we'll get it done, together.

For more information on becoming a JLG Agriculture dealer, please go to [www.jlgagriculture.com/become-a-dealer](http://www.jlgagriculture.com/become-a-dealer).

— **Jamey Patla, Vice President & General Manager, JLG Agriculture**



## The Most Trusted Name in No-Till

Thank you for considering our products. We feel honored to be able to serve your needs. As farmers ourselves, we know the frustration that unforeseen obstacles can bring, especially inclement weather. While we can't do anything about untimely rains or droughts, we can help equip your customers' planter to allow for more time spent planting and less time waiting to get seed in the ground. Our customers believe that Martin-Till row cleaners, UMO's, closing wheels and 2 stage closing systems provide an excellent return on their investment. We know this because a large percentage of them are repeat customers. Our planter attachments help make it possible to plant into higher levels of residue and moisture. Higher levels of mulch means less erosion, improved soil tilth and fertility, which can reduce production costs. Our goal is to increase yields and save growers time and money. We hope you find something in our product offerings that will make this year's planting go better for you. After all, you deserve the best!

— **The Martin Family**



### Watch Martin Industries Docuseries



Learn more about how Martin Industries overcame adversity and executed their big idea in this episode of the "How We Did It" Docuseries.



### Download The No-Till Revolution Timeline





## Expand With Us — Looking for Dealers: Transplanters, Harvesters and Cutter Wagons

**O**hio Valley Lavender LLC is committed to importing technologically advanced and unique farm equipment to the American farmer. Bonino and Sapperi represent the highest quality machines in the European market and continue to innovate with each model. We began importing machines manufactured by both companies in 2020, and by virtue of an exponential increase in sales and customer inquiries, we have decided to seek dealerships to carry these products. My wife and I are lavender farmers, and we discovered these companies while searching for a lavender harvester. Having visited both factories and conducting in-person meetings in Italy, we can personally affirm the quality and craftsmanship of both companies.



Bonino is introducing its Zero Graze machines into the U.S. dairy market. The Zero Graze machines allow dairy farmers to feed their cattle more effectively and efficiently by utilizing fresh grass/alfalfa/hay instead of continuous silage feeding. The machines cut the grass, stack clippings in the trailer and distribute to the cattle; all without leaving the seat of the tractor. You can view all Bonino products at [www.boninoitaly.com](http://www.boninoitaly.com).

Spapperi is an innovative company that develops and improves transplanters for all types of plants including vegetables, tobacco, vineyards, tree farms and medicinal herbs. While transplanters have been in the U.S. for a significant amount of time, Spapperi has redesigned standard transplanters to fit the needs of the 21st century farmer. You can view and request information about Spapperi products at [www.spapperi.com](http://www.spapperi.com).

Please visit the manufactures' websites for a full listing and description of equipment. Give us a call or send us an email to discuss the possibility of becoming a dealer. We can be reached at 513-266-4481 (please leave a message), or [contact@ohiovalleylavender.com](mailto:contact@ohiovalleylavender.com).

— **John and Katie Staker, Owners**



## An Opportunity to Improve Service During an Industry Downturn

**F**arm equipment dealers have experienced financial stress due to less demand for new farm equipment. This decrease in demand has been affected by several factors such as higher interest rates, lower commodity prices, inflation, equipment surpluses, and weather related impact.

While new equipment isn't selling like it was in the past, the aftermarket side of the dealership is presented with a growth opportunity. This is due to the increase in required service and parts replacement due to producers keeping equipment longer. One area that Shop Dog Industries ("SDI") is seeing dealerships increase aftermarket sales is by improving inspection programs.

Since 2013, SDI has been helping dealers rethink and implement new ways of looking at the inspection process. Our current and future product offerings are

fully designed around increasing efficiency, quality of service and safety during the inspection and repair process on farm equipment. By



utilizing products by SDI, dealerships will increase parts sales due to more thorough inspections while also selling more service hours replacing those parts resulting in increased uptime for the customer.

During stressful times, it can be hard to know what is the best way to invest in growing or protecting your business. SDI can help you invest in affordable service solutions that will ultimately lead to increases in aftermarket sales when new equipment sales are scarce.

Contact Brendan Leep at (406) 209-1430 or [brendanleep@shopdogindustries.com](mailto:brendanleep@shopdogindustries.com) to learn more about what SDI can offer you. Visit our website at [ShopDogIndustries.com](http://ShopDogIndustries.com).

— **Brendan Leep,  
Co-Owner & Account Manager,  
Shop Dog Industries**





## Stronger Than Ever Over 40 Years Later

**S**ITREX has been present in the U.S. for over 40 years.

Our company has conquered the market thanks to the quality of our products, innovation and reliability. Today, it covers the entire U.S. territory with a vast network of distributors and 4 SITREX USA warehouses.

We supply a full haymaking range from small machines to the most advanced products that represent the future of large crops areas in North America.

Our brand is known worldwide in the

haymaking industry, and we are proud of this success and growth for over four decades. SITREX also added the diet mixers production to the line 15 years ago.

Nowadays, modern harvesting technologies have provided a need to improve the efficient use of machines and equipment. It is necessary to take into account the features in relation to the type of customer and the maturity of the market, such as that of farmers in North America.

Our distributors provide great support for our dealers and farmers by being present and assisting the end user directly. Our relationship with our dealers and distributors is always evolving. We place a high value on the professionalism of our dealers and efforts they take in training both their personnel and the customers on the use of more complex machines. Customers are increasingly informed about the products and welcome the news and innovation.

Our company history is long and stable, without changes in the structure. Therefore, the quality of our products is recognized by the market, and the perception of this value is understood by the users of SITREX machines.

— **Giovanni  
Signorelli,  
President, SITREX**



## Preserving a Legacy: Superior Finishes Inc. — A Tradition of Excellence in Paint Manufacturing

**W**e are JP, Jacqueline, Jamie and Jea Guertin, and we're proud to continue the legacy our father, Tony Guertin Jr., began in 1992 with Superior Finishes Inc. As a family-owned and operated liquid industrial paint manufacturing company, we represent the fourth generation in paint manufacturing, committed to the principles of quality, weatherability and trust that have been our foundation from day one.

Our company's strength lies in the expertise passed down through

generations, supported by our state-of-the-art research and development lab. With a talented team of chemists, including multiple PhDs, and a group of dedicated long-term employees, we've been able to consistently deliver high-quality products to our customers across North America.

Lean manufacturing practices have been integral to our operations, allowing us to maintain efficiency and reliability. We take great pride in our track record, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we ensured that none of our customers ran out of paint. As we approach an 8-year record of no backorders and consistent, on-time deliveries for stocked products, we remain committed to upholding the standards that our customers have come to trust.

At Superior Finishes, we work closely with our customers to identify areas for improvement and to develop new technologies that enhance their production lines. This hands-on, collaborative approach has been key to our long-term success, and we look forward to continuing to serve our customers with the same dedication and excellence that has defined Superior Finishes for over three decades.

— **JP, Jacqueline, Jamie and Jea Guertin**





## Low Sidewall Technology Proven Again to Provide Significant Fuel Savings & Power to the Ground

The article from Dan Crummett in *Farm Equipment* and *No-Till Farmer* is excellent news for farmers.

When you look at Dan's information from the farmers in Canada, the tractors have dual LSW900R46 and dual 800R38 setups. Everyone should know that duals only get 80% combined surface area. An 800R38 dual setup does not give you 1,600 square-inches of surface area; it is 80% or 1,280 square-inches footprint. So, an LSW1400R46 gives you a bigger surface area.



LSW1000/1100 setup



LSW1400 setup



LSW1100/1250 setup



LSW1400 setup

Dan found that the LSW1400R46 super single option saved 1/3 gallon of fuel per acre vs. the dual LSW900R46. That is a big savings! But it's not just the 30%+ fuel savings per acre; they also found that the yield is more per acre. With their front tires at 15 psi and the rear at 12 psi, the slippage maxed out at 4%. But remember, the transmission can control the slippage. After all these years, farmers should examine carefully how they use equipment (tires) to deliver power to the ground.

With the potential for 1/3 gallon per acre fuel savings, the cost-effectiveness of LSW super singles becomes clear. While some farmers may prefer tracks, the benefit of LSW tires are undeniable. They offer lower costs, less compaction and a smoother ride, making them a superior choice for operations worldwide.

Titan offers LSW800R to LSW1400R Deep Drop (DD) 54-inch tires and produces LSW tires for tractors, combines, sprayers, grain carts and other heavy equipment. Find a dealer near you by visiting [www.titan-intl.com](http://www.titan-intl.com).

Thank you!

— **Morry Taylor, Chairman  
of the Board, Titan  
International Inc.**

**LSW**<sup>®</sup>  
Low Sidewall Technology<sup>®</sup>

**TITAN**<sup>®</sup>

## Strengthening Agriculture Through Dealer Partnerships

At Vermeer Forage Solutions, we understand that farmers' success is closely tied to their strong relationships with local equipment dealers. Dealers are more than just business partners; they're trusted advisors, problem-solvers and often friends to the farming community. Their deep understanding of local condi-

tions and challenges makes them invaluable in helping farmers choose the right solutions for their unique needs.



Recognizing this crucial role, Vermeer is deeply committed to supporting our dealer network. We invest heavily in providing our dealers with the tools, training and resources they need to

offer unparalleled service to farmers. This commitment goes beyond supplying quality equipment; it extends to comprehensive parts availability, responsive technical support and continuous education on the latest agricultural innovations.

Our approach to innovation is guided by feedback from both farmers and dealers.

This collaborative process helps ensure that we're not just creating new technologies but developing practical solutions that address real-world challenges in the field. By fostering strong relationships between farmers, dealers and our own team, we create a powerful ecosystem of support and innovation.

Looking ahead, we're excited about the opportunities to strengthen these partnerships further. As agriculture continues to evolve, dealers' role in providing localized expertise and support will only grow in importance. At Vermeer, we're dedicated to empowering our dealers to meet these future challenges and ensuring that farmers have access to the best possible support for their operations.

With our dealers, we're building a stronger, more resilient agricultural community.

— **Shane Rourke, Managing Director,  
Vermeer Forage Solutions**





## Walinga Celebrates 70 Years

**W**alinga Inc., established in 1954, has grown from a small blacksmith shop in rural Ontario to a leading manufacturer of specialized agricultural and feed transportation equipment. The company was founded by Cornelius Walinga and John Medemblik, Dutch immigrants with a passion for craftsmanship and innovation. Their initial motto was “build any body for anybody” and they quickly recognized the need for



custom-built solutions in the agricultural sector.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Walinga expanded its product line, introducing in-

novative pneumatic conveying systems and grain vacuums that revolutionized the handling and transportation of agricultural products. These innovations established Walinga as a trusted name in the industry, known for durable, efficient and reliable equipment.

In the decades that followed, Walinga continued to grow, opening additional manufacturing facilities in Canada and the U.S. The company's commitment to quality and customer service, combined with its ability to adapt to the evolving needs of its customers, has enabled it to remain at the forefront of the industry for seven decades.

Today, Walinga serves a global market, offering a wide range of products, including bulk feed bodies, grain vacs, and pneumatic conveying systems. Despite its growth, Walinga remains a family-owned business, upholding the values of integrity, innovation, and excellence that were in-

stilled by its founder. The company's 70-year legacy is a testament to its enduring commitment to quality and its ability to innovate in response to changing market demands.

— **Jonathan Medemblik,**  
**Marketing Manager,**  
**Walinga Inc.**



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# How Big is *Too Big*?

In the farm, outdoor power or construction equipment (CE) retail dealership business, one critical demographic is the number of stores you operate. Another is the number of employees in your dealership(s). Over 40 years in the industry, I've seen various shapes and sizes of dealerships, ranging from small operations with fewer than 5 employees to larger ones with over 100 employees. However, the focus here will be on the size of dealership complexes measured by the number of locations rather than the number of employees.

While the number of locations doesn't necessarily indicate total revenue or profitability, it's the most visible growth indicator. Many customers in our industry are growth-oriented, constantly expanding their operations. Similarly, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) prefer dealing with a few well-capitalized dealers rather than numerous smaller ones. Thus, dealers are squeezed between larger customers and more influential OEMs.

After retiring as a dealership owner/operator, I joined the Machinery Advisors Consortium (MAC), known for contributing to the annual Big Dealer Report published by *Ag Equipment Intelligence*. This report documents farm equipment dealerships with 5 or more locations and defines them as "Big."

So, how big is too big? Most dealers started small and grew, perhaps by expanding their buildings or acquiring neighboring dealers. The Big Dealer Report shows that most dealers have grown, but the question remains: How big is too big?

Recently, Kubota informed their dealers that future sales and service agreements would limit the number of retail locations one ownership group may operate. This is the first instance I've seen where an OEM explicitly limits the number of outlets a dealer may have. While this limit is irrelevant to 99.9% of dealers now, it may become more significant in the future.

**How Big Can We Get?** For those in growth mode, the critical question is: how big can we stand to get? In our society, growth is often seen as essential to success. A respected dealer recently told me that growth is crucial to remaining "relevant in the market," and I agree.

Many advisors in our industry believe that growing from 1 to 2 stores is the hardest step, especially if the second store is similar in size to the original. Growth often stems from having multiple family members in the business. Although there may be some growing pains, the cultures of the two stores will eventually align. Capitalization is crucial but usually manageable when growing one store at a time.

Expanding from two stores to four or five is a different challenge. Systems and processes for operational efficiency become critical, and the financial investment required typically increases debt or necessitates more partners. Management roles evolve, introducing new challenges. Many dealerships stall at this phase due to the increased headaches that come with growth, leading to an attitude of "we're big enough now."

Moving from a 4-5 store model to a 6-10 store operation can

be achieved over time. However, many 4-5 store complexes may struggle to acquire another multi-store complex to grow further. This significant growth requires significant capital, both for the initial purchase and the working capital needed to manage a larger operation. At this stage, dealerships often require a board of directors, additional management layers and outside talent. If they survive the initial growing pains, they typically continue to expand. The question of "How big is too big?" shifts to "How

much can we borrow?" or "Who can we find to manage this thing?"

**Are We Too Big?** Once a dealership reaches 10 or more stores and is on solid financial ground, it typically has good people who naturally want to see growth. Strong leadership in the form of a CEO, CFO, COO and HR becomes essential. OEMs and lenders scrutinize exit plans, capitaliza-

tion plans, and succession plans. Consolidators may include ESOPs, private equity or publicly traded entities. It is at this point, the question arises: Are we too big?

The answer to "How big is too big?" depends on several factors. The key for owners is understanding their comfort level with risk, control and growth potential. Questions to consider include how much risk they are willing to take, how much control they are willing to relinquish, and whether the next generation or leadership group can further expand. Ultimately, the decision comes down to personal goals and values, such as whether they want to be the biggest implement dealer, the happiest or both.

Securing help from various sources is crucial regarding growth and the associated risks and rewards. Don't be the person who doesn't know what they don't know.

## ► Key Conclusions:

- ◆ **Growth Complexity:** The complexity and challenges of dealership growth vary significantly with each expansion phase, requiring different strategies, capital investments and management structures.
- ◆ **OEM Influence:** OEMs play a significant role in shaping dealership growth, as seen with Kubota's recent limitations on the number of retail locations. This highlights the evolving dynamics between dealers and manufacturers.
- ◆ **Personal Goals and Comfort Levels:** The decision on how big a dealership should grow ultimately depends on the owner's comfort with risk, desire for control, and personal goals, making it a subjective rather than a purely an objective decision. **FE**

***A respected dealer recently told me that growth is crucial to remaining 'relevant in the market'...***



*MAC member, Leo Johnson started selling farm equipment at the retail level in 1978 for a very small International Harvester dealership in Clinton, WI. After acquiring 50% ownership, Leo grew Johnson Tractor to a 5 store complex exceeding \$140MM in annual sales with over 100 employees. Leo retired in 2021 and continues to farm approximately 1,000 acres of corn and soybeans in southern Wisconsin. He has been active in industry leadership positions in the local, regional, and national levels.*



# Drone Mapping Technology Slashes Chemical Costs By 70%

**R**ecent digital technology improvements have spawned the ability to scan entire fields quickly and inexpensively with drones, then provide maps identifying specific weeds and their locations — all in about 12 hours.

For the past 3 years, Minnesota-based plant analytics service Sentera has been proving its in-house designed sensors are capable of pin-pointing specific weed species as small as ¼ inch and verifying those findings with university-based ground-truthing research. The correlations of what Sentera's drones are seeing and what agronomists on the ground find are about 99%.

Eric Taipale, Sentera's chief technology officer and founder, says the improvement in sensor resolution plus a corresponding recent leap in digital technology will make significant improvements in farm ROI by reducing herbicide use. Sentera's technology allows full fields of drone footage to be analyzed in a readily usable form without stitching several files together.

**In the Field.** Sentera's Aerial WeedScout has been under beta testing on about 10,000 Corn Belt acres over the past 3 seasons and has shown 70% savings in herbicide costs over traditional full-field broadcast applications.

"When we overfly a field, we know exactly which species of weeds are present and where, and that enables agronomists on the ground to determine the appropriate crop protection product and the quantity needed to treat the infestations," Taipale says. "By treating only the areas affected by weed pressure, additional herbicides no longer will be applied to unaffected crops. The savings can be astounding."

Sentera began developing Aerial WeedScout in 2018, and part of that R&D includes new sensors capable of 1.5 mm resolution per pixel. That clarity, combined with the company's artificial intelligence (AI) library of plant characteristics developed over 10



**Within 24 hours of drone deployment, aerial weedscout's targeted herbicide prescriptions are digitally delivered and seamlessly integrated with any precision sprayer. This optimizes chemical use and reduces non-residual herbicide costs by up to 70%, according to Sentera.**

years of crop stand and crop condition sensing, enable early detection of weeds at optimum growth stages for herbicidal control. Growers or their farm service organizations can fly the fields and have actionable maps to develop weed control prescriptions within about 12 hours.

Satellite imagery generally lacks such a sharp eye and often requires days to provide decision-making information.

"Timing is a great selling point for Aerial WeedScout, but the new system also puts a new level of precision within

easy reach of anyone with a sprayer with nozzle or section control," says Brian Wenngatz, Sentera CEO. "Our system is flexible and can be accessed directly with on-farm drones or through our extensive pilot/drone network across the U.S."

**Cost Savings.** Wenngatz and Taipale are confident Aerial WeedScout offers upfront and long-term savings to no-tillers who recoil at the cost of new AI-equipped sprayers and weeders that incorporate on-board sensing and AI-directed application.

"Initially the program eliminates the need for new equipment," Taipale says. "While we are a two-step system, we can run sprayers at normal field speeds with accurate application and not have to slow down to give the machine time to see and spray target weeds."

"If a custom applicator has to reduce speed by X% to accomplish the job, that machine is X% less productive than a machine running at normal field speeds.

In that case, if I'm a custom applicator, I have to buy and maintain more machines than I would if I used Aerial WeedScout and a traditional sprayer. That represents increased capital costs and labor/operational costs year after year."

Both agree their two-step system is more than competitive with on-board AI applicators. The savings accrue with reduced supply chain costs in herbicide use and related handling, optimizing logistics of herbicide delivery with smaller orders and requiring fewer sprayers to service a given job. Sentera is quick to note it is not in the agronomy business and does not write crop protection prescriptions.

"We are building relationships with a number of OEMs, farm service organizations and crop protection suppliers to serve their agronomists on the ground," Wenngatz says. "We just wrapped up our technology validation trials for 2024, and the next step is to huddle with our commercial partners in preparation for a limited commercial release of Aerial WeedScout in 2025."

"We've been providing a pilot network for years to collect field data for our agricultural analytics projects, so we can collect millions of acres of data today for our retail business and we have significant capacity to grow with Aerial WeedScout." **FE**



*Dan Crummett has more than 30 years experience in ag journalism, farm magazines and machinery reporting.*



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# Dealers Report Higher OPE Scores, Higher Satisfaction in 2024

Grasshopper & Wright Mfg. dominate NAEDA dealer-manufacturer rankings of OPE OEMs

By Mike Lessiter, Editor/Publisher

Outdoor power equipment (OPE) manufacturers improved their year-over-year dealer satisfaction scores in 2024. The 73% satisfaction rate tied shortline equipment as the best among the four categories studied by NAEDA (full-line, tractors, OPE and shortline manufacturers). Only 12% of OPE dealers expressed dissatisfaction, compared to 11% for shortlines. The OPE score is a staggering distance from the 24% and 28% marks in dissatisfaction for full-line and tractor manufacturers, respectively.

In the 2024 survey, all OPE categories were higher than last year's except 4: parts quality, product technical support, warranty payments and warranty procedures.

## What Dealers Value Most

Ag Equipment Intelligence grouped the NAEDA data together by what was reported to be "Very Important" or "Fairly Important." While product quality and parts availability remained unchanged as the No. 1 and 2 categories, the 2024 survey showed that parts quality, manufacturer responsiveness and product technical support moved up to round out the 5 most important characteristics. Showing how different the business conditions have become, product availability was the No. 3 concern in 2023, but dropped to No. 7 in 2024.

The areas that dealers value most are:

1. Product Quality: 95%
2. Parts Availability: 93%
3. Parts Quality: 92%
4. Manufacturer Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns: 92%
5. Product Technical Support: 91%
6. Warranty Payments: 88%
7. Product Availability: 87%
8. Warranty Procedures: 86%

9. Communication with Management: 84%
10. Marketing & Advertising Support: 74%
11. Return Privileges: 72%

## Company by Company Results

As seen in Table 2, 2 OPE manufacturers dominated dealers' rankings. Grasshopper led all OEMs in 8 categories, while Wright Mfg. took the top position in 5.

Meanwhile 3 manufacturers sit at the bottom of dealers' rankings. Husqvarna had the lowest scores in 10 categories, while Cub Cadet had 2. Honda also

notched a worst-place finish.

Following are the manufacturers' performance in each of the studied categories, in the order of what is important to dealers. The numerical scores are based on a scale of 1 (extremely dissatisfied to 7 (extremely satisfied), while the trending data is expressed in percentage change.

## Overall Satisfaction

**Highest:** Grasshopper (6.20), Wright Mfg. (6.19), Scag (5.93)

**Trending Up:** Ferris (+9.38%), Briggs & Stratton (+8.32%), Walker (+5.38%)

**Lowest:** Husqvarna (4.39),

**Table 1. % Change 2023 vs 2024 – Group Scores**

	Product & Parts Availability Score	Product & Parts Availability % Change	Product & Parts Quality Score	Product & Parts Quality % Change	Administrative Programs & Protocols Score	Administrative Programs & Protocols % Change
Ariens	5.53	+6.96%	5.64	-1.57%	5.05	-3.83%
Bad Boy	5.89	-0.93%	5.92	-4.82%	5.54	-1.93%
Billy Goat	5.30	+12.42%	5.70	+2.15%	5.14	+3.29%
Briggs & Stratton	4.92	+10.33%	5.29	+9.08%	4.88	+3.72%
Cub Cadet	5.29	+11.37%	5.18	+1.17%	4.74	-1.26%
Dixie Chopper	5.56	+5.50%	5.68	-1.65%	5.20	-0.99%
ECHO	5.96	+3.48%	6.17	+1.15%	5.41	+0.31%
Exmark	5.87	+10.96%	6.15	+0.82%	5.81	-1.68%
Ferris	4.64	+19.28%	5.62	+8.40%	4.95	+2.37%
Grasshopper	6.24	+11.63%	6.43	+1.34%	5.98	+3.57%
Gravely	5.52	+6.16%	5.59	-1.15%	5.16	-2.60%
Honda	4.90	+10.48%	5.77	+1.58%	4.66	+2.12%
Husqvarna	4.01	+9.12%	4.71	+9.79%	4.25	-5.30%
Hustler	5.33	+11.05%	5.62	+2.74%	5.00	-2.17%
Kawasaki	5.74	+2.41%	6.00	+0.08%	5.44	-0.69%
Kohler	5.38	+6.43%	5.56	+3.83%	5.17	+1.20%
Scag	6.11	+7.19%	6.12	-2.08%	5.68	-3.28%
Shindaiwa	6.09	+4.55%	6.18	+1.15%	5.72	+2.74%
STIHL	5.59	+12.70%	5.89	+4.53%	5.37	-0.08%
Toro	5.16	+3.20%	5.56	-0.63%	4.99	-2.17%
Walker	5.73	+22.57%	6.00	+9.09%	5.65	+4.26%
Wright Mfg	5.73	+0.26%	6.29	+2.78%	5.92	+1.81%

**Note:** Green = highest score in that category; Red = lowest score

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence



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Honda (4.90), Cub Cadet (4.92).  
**Trending Down:** Dixie Chopper (-6.24%), Gravely (-5.81%), Cub Cadet (-5.75%)

**1. Product Quality**  
**Highest:** Grasshopper (6.40),

Wright Mfg. (6.26), ECHO (6.23)  
**Trending Up:** Briggs & Stratton (+4.76%), Walker (+3.47%), Kohler (+0.93%)  
**Lowest:** Husqvarna (4.62), Cub Cadet (5.05), Briggs & Stratton (5.28)

**Trending Down:** Honda (-7.34%), Ariens (-5.76%), Scag (-5.51%)  
**2. Parts Availability**  
**Highest:** Grasshopper (6.37), Scag (6.16), Shindaiwa (6.11)  
**Trending Up:** Walker (+9.73%),

Table 2. Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey OPE Results – 2024

RATINGS SCALE: 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 7 = Extremely Satisfied	Mean Score	Communications w/ Management	Mfr. Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns	Marketing & Advertising Support	Overall Satisfaction	Parts Availability	Parts Quality	Product Availability	Product Quality	Product Technical Support	Return Privileges	Warranty Payments	Warranty Procedures	2024 Mean Average	Mean Average 3-year Change
															
Ariens	5.20	4.82	4.52	4.72	5.13	5.55	5.72	5.51	5.56	5.43	4.97	5.26	5.26	5.20	-5.02%
Bad Boy	5.64	5.43	5.3	5.52	5.89	5.82	5.81	5.96	6.03	5.6	5.23	5.49	5.57	5.64	-0.54%
Billy Goat	5.26	5.07	5.07	4.76	5.35	5.48	5.6	5.11	5.79	5.38	5.11	5.19	5.18	5.26	-0.99%
Blue Mountain Equipment	5.37	5.05	4.95	5.05	5.68	5.21	5.68	5.42	5.58	5.68	5	5.47	5.63	5.37	
Briggs & Stratton	5.00	4.75	4.71	4.64	5.34	4.83	5.29	5	5.28	5.31	4.7	5.17	5.03	5.00	+0.35%
Crader Distributing	5.45	5.48	5.24	5.35	5.58	5.52	5.72	5.63	5.71	5.71	4.84	5.29	5.33	5.45	
Cub Cadet	4.85	4.6	4.42	4.86	4.92	5.27	5.3	5.31	5.05	4.57	4.67	4.68	4.52	4.85	-3.95%
Dixie Chopper	5.35	4.88	4.82	4.88	5.41	5.47	5.59	5.65	5.76	5.59	5.12	5.65	5.35	5.35	+2.54%
ECHO	5.62	5.2	5.21	4.97	5.82	5.93	6.1	5.98	6.23	5.84	5.17	5.48	5.46	5.62	-1.95%
Exmark	5.87	5.73	5.61	5.7	5.83	6.07	6.2	5.67	6.09	6.04	5.76	5.84	5.85	5.87	-1.41%
Ferris	5.09	4.68	4.66	4.8	5.25	4.71	5.59	4.57	5.64	5.46	5.02	5.4	5.32	5.09	-9.54%
Grasshopper	6.08	5.9	5.86	5.83	6.2	6.37	6.45	6.11	6.4	6.35	5.68	5.91	5.94	6.08	+2.46%
Gravely	5.27	4.88	4.63	4.98	5.19	5.53	5.63	5.5	5.54	5.44	5.11	5.47	5.38	5.27	-6.65%
Honda	4.87	4.28	4.07	4.33	4.9	5.53	5.86	4.27	5.68	5.15	4.81	4.76	4.76	4.87	+0.74%
Husqvarna	4.35	3.92	3.81	4.22	4.39	3.73	4.8	4.29	4.62	4.38	4.3	4.92	4.78	4.35	-9.88%
Hustler	5.14	4.88	4.68	4.75	5.38	5.47	5.63	5.18	5.6	5.22	4.81	5.1	5.01	5.14	-10.42%
Kawasaki	5.60	5.29	5.32	5.27	5.92	5.71	5.99	5.76	6.01	5.77	5.2	5.47	5.45	5.60	-2.61%
Kohler	5.28	5.03	4.98	4.89	5.47	5.44	5.67	5.32	5.45	5.51	5.05	5.36	5.19	5.28	-2.84%
Pace Inc.	5.23	5.11	4.95	5.15	5.34	5.26	5.54	5.05	5.57	5.39	5.02	5.23	5.13	5.23	
Power Equipment Dist.	5.33	5.15	5.13	5.15	5.48	5.19	5.7	5.29	5.74	5.38	5.14	5.34	5.26	5.33	
Scag	5.81	5.63	5.36	5.37	5.93	6.16	6.24	6.06	6.00	5.92	5.61	5.73	5.72	5.81	-4.57%
Shindaiwa	5.86	5.46	5.49	5.35	6.07	6.11	6.14	6.07	6.21	6.05	5.56	5.87	5.91	5.86	-1.83%
STIHL	5.48	5.07	5.05	5.41	5.52	5.6	5.93	5.58	5.84	5.68	5.06	5.46	5.55	5.48	+0.49%
Toro	5.10	4.52	4.36	4.84	5.18	5.44	5.67	4.88	5.45	5.13	4.99	5.37	5.32	5.10	-7.61%
Walker	5.75	5.7	5.66	5.54	5.88	5.75	6.04	5.71	5.96	6	5.56	5.57	5.57	5.75	-4.71%
Wright Mfg.	5.99	5.96	5.92	5.85	6.19	5.91	6.32	5.55	6.26	6.09	6.00	5.92	5.87	5.99	-2.23%
Grand Total	5.38	5.10	4.99	5.08	5.51	5.50	5.78	5.40	5.73	5.54	5.13	5.40	5.36		

Note: Green = highest score in that category; Red = lowest score Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence





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## OPE Distributors Now Counted in Results

NAEDA included several OPE distributors in the survey for the first time, at the request of Blue Mountain Equipment, Crader Distributing, Pace Inc. and Power Equipment Distributors. "The OPE Dealer Council suggested that distributors be included as, in many cases, they have more direct contact with the dealers when repping the manufacturers," says Joe Dykes, NAEDA's vice president of industry relations.

According to Dykes, Blue Mountain and Crader are primarily Stihl distributors, while Pace and Power Equipment Distributors carry various lines, such as Scag, Ferris, Exmark, Toro and Wright.

Crader Distributing had the highest average mean at 5.45 followed by Blue Mountain Equipment (5.37), Power Equipment Distributors (5.33) and Pace Inc. (5.23)

Honda (+5.74%), STIHL (+5.46%)

**Lowest:** Husqvarna (3.73), Ferris (4.71), Briggs & Stratton (4.83)

**Trending Down:** Bad Boy (-5.21%), Toro (-3.72%), Kawasaki (-1.89%)

### 3. Parts Quality

**Highest:** Grasshopper (6.45), Wright Mfg. (6.32), Scag (6.24)

**Trending Up:** Walker (+4.32%), Briggs & Stratton (+1.34%), Kohler (+0.89%)

**Lowest:** Husqvarna (4.80), Briggs &

Stratton (5.29), Cub Cadet (5.30)

**Trending Down:** Bad Boy (-6.29%), Husqvarna (-5.70%), Toro (-3.74%)

### 4. Manufacturer Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns

**Highest:** Wright Mfg. (5.92), Grasshopper (5.86), Walker (5.66%)

**Trending Up:** Ferris (+10.95%), Billy Goat (+9.50%), Briggs & Stratton (+7.53%)

**Lowest:** Husqvarna (3.81), Honda (4.07), Toro (4.36)

**Trending Down:** Scag (-9.15%), Ariens (-6.42%), Dixie Chopper (-6.41%)

### 5. Product

#### Technical Support

**Highest:** Wright Mfg. (6.09), Shindaiwa (6.05), Exmark (6.04)

**Trending Up:** Walker (+6.57%), Wright Mfg (+3.40%), Briggs & Stratton (+2.91%)

**Lowest:** Toro (5.13), Honda (5.15), Hustler (5.22)

**Trending Down:** Husqvarna (-8.75%), Cub Cadet (-7.49%), Dixie Chopper (-5.57%)

### 6. Warranty Payments

**Highest:** Wright Mfg. (5.92), Grasshopper (5.91), Shindaiwa (5.87)

**Trending Up:** Dixie Chopper (+1.99%), Billy Goat (+1.96%), Kohler (+1.90%)

**Lowest:** Cub Cadet (4.68), Honda (4.76), Husqvarna (4.92)

**Trending Down:** Husqvarna (-6.46%), Toro (-5.95%), Ariens (-4.54%)

The advertisement features the HitchDoc logo at the top left, which includes a stylized horse head and the brand name. The main headline reads "TACKLE WINTER'S WORST WITH OUR HEAVY-DUTY SNOWBLOWERS". Below this, the text "PTO BLOWERS" is prominently displayed in large, bold letters. To the left of the central image, it says "SKID STEER BLOWERS", and to the right, "WHEEL LOADER BLOWERS". The central image shows a green tractor with a yellow snowblower attachment, flanked by smaller images of skid steer and wheel loader snowblowers. At the bottom, the text "VERSATILE, RELIABLE, AMERICAN-MADE" is followed by "THE CHOICE IS CLEAR." in large, bold letters. Below this, it says "Scan The QR Code to Learn More!" and a QR code is provided in the bottom right corner.



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## 7. Product Availability

**Highest:** Grasshopper (6.11), Shindaiwa (6.07), Scag (6.06)

**Trending Up:** Ferris (+49.35%), Walker (+38.93%), Billy Goat (+25.55%)

**Lowest:** Honda (4.27), Husqvarna (4.29), Ferris (4.57)

**Trending Down:** No declines

## 8. Warranty Procedures

**Highest:** Grasshopper (5.94), Shindaiwa (5.91), Wright Mfg. (5.87)

**Trending Up:** Billy Goat (+5.07%), Kohler (+2.77%), Honda (+2.37%)

**Lowest:** Cub Cadet (4.52), Honda (4.76), Husqvarna (4.78)

**Trending Down:** Cub Cadet (-6.22%), Toro (-6.01%), Ariens (-5.23%)

## 9. Communications with Management

**Highest:** Wright Mfg. (5.96), Grasshopper (5.90), Exmark (5.73)

**Trending Up:** Briggs & Stratton (+5.56%), Ferris (+4.93%), Walker (+4.01%)

## Grasshopper: Consistency is Key

For the past 10 years, including 2024, Grasshopper has consistently appeared among the Top 5 OPE manufacturers in the annual NAEDA Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey. This points to a key aspect of our company's ethos: consistency. The past several years has seen a number of mergers, acquisitions and leadership changes in the OPE industry; many which brought uncertainty for OPE dealers. But for 67 years, Grasshopper continues to be family owned and operated. We continue to build our mowers to last years decades and generations — which is evidenced by our top marks in the products- and parts-related categories in the 2024 results.

We take the same approach to building relationships with our dealers as we do to building our mowers: we're in it for the long haul. Overall, the consistency we provide in company stability, product quality, product longevity, product dependability, customer satisfaction, etc., matters a great deal to our dealers. — Michael Simmon, The Grasshopper Co., Moundridge, Kan.

**Lowest:** Husqvarna (3.92), Honda (4.28), Toro (4.52)  
**Trending Down:** Scag (-5.70%), Ariens (-4.55%), Toro (-4.24%)

Walker (+6.74%)  
**Lowest:** Husqvarna (4.22), Honda (4.33), Briggs & Stratton (4.64)  
**Trending Down:** Hustler (-5.19%), Scag (-4.79%), Gravelly (-2.35%)

## 10. Marketing & Advertising Support

**Highest:** Wright Mfg. (5.85), Exmark (5.70), Walker (5.54)  
**Trending Up:** Briggs & Stratton (+10.21%), Ferris (+8.84%),

## 11. Return Privileges

**Highest:** Wright Mfg. (6.00), Exmark (5.76), Grasshopper (5.68),  
**Trending Up:** Walker (+12.15%), Briggs & Stratton (7.31%), Ferris (+6.81%)  
**Lowest:** Husqvarna (4.30), Cub Cadet (4.67), Briggs & Stratton (4.70),  
**Trending Down:** Wright Mfg (-100.00%), Ariens (-5.69%), Hustler (-4.94%)



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A simplified look at the results is shown in Table 1. It shows a first-ever aggregation of the OPE manufacturers into 3 categories, and their change year-over-year. In these grouped categories, Grasshopper earned the top spot in all 3 areas — product/parts availability, product and parts quality, and administrative programs/protocols. Shindaiwa earned the second-highest scores in availability and quality, with Wright Mfg. finishing second in administration and protocols.

## 2024 NAEDA Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Report

The 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Report is available to all NAEDA dealer members and to participating manufacturers. For information, contact Joe Dykes at [jdykes@equipmentdealer.org](mailto:jdykes@equipmentdealer.org)





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In terms of most improved year-over-year, Walker's scores increased 22.57% in availability and 4.26% in administration. Despite having low scores, Husqvarna actually had the largest increase year-over-year in product/parts quality.

Ag Equipment Intelligence's historical data tables also shed light to those manufacturers "on the rise." Walker improved in every single category vs. its 2023 figures, with 3 manufacturers tied for the second best

performance. Grasshopper, Ferris and Briggs & Stratton grew in all but 1 category in 2024 — in overall satisfaction (0.32%), parts availability (-0.21%) and warranty procedures (-1.18%), respectively. **RLD**

### Small-Sized Tractor Performance

For the first time, *Ag Equipment Intelligence* examined the broader tractor results by horsepower range. What follows below is the dealers' rankings of smaller-sized tractors. The higher horsepower tractors, meanwhile, are examined by *Farm Equipment* (see p. 76). The tables show the smaller tractor manufacturers, such as Kioti, LS Tractor, Mahindra, TYM and Yanmar, who generally score better vs. their higher horsepower counterparts. When examining the OEMs supplying the smaller power tractors, Kioti took 7 first-place finishes. Yanmar took 5, and LS Tractor took 1.

Meanwhile, Mahindra finished last in every category with the exception of marketing/ad support, in which Yanmar performed the worst.

Yet despite its near last-place scores across the field, Mahindra

also had the highest 3-year change in average mean with a 15.29% improvement. Among the average mean scores that fell over the last 3 years, LS Tractor had the biggest drop at -6.68%. **Grouped Analysis.** The grouped analysis showed the same thing. Kioti had the best performance in product/parts availability and administrative programs/protocols. (Interestingly, all tractor OEMs went backward in this category from 2023 to 2024.) And LS Tractor had the smallest product/parts quality score among the small tractor segment, yet still saw an improvement at +0.37%.

TYM notched the best improvement in the products/parts quality, improving 16.49% vs. last year, while Yanmar made the biggest improvement in administrative programs/protocols at a modest 0.40%.

### Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey Small Tractor Results – 2024

RATINGS SCALE: 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 7 = Extremely Satisfied	Mean Score	Communications w/ Management	Mfr. Response to Dealer Needs/Concerns	Marketing & Advertising Support	Overall Satisfaction	Parts Availability	Parts Quality	Product Availability	Product Quality	Product Technical Support	Return Privileges	Warranty Payments	Warranty Procedures	2024 Mean Average	Mean Average 3-year Change
Kioti	5.09	4.5	4.3	5.01	5.48	5.11	5.73	5.48	5.83	5.26	4.69	5.01	4.72	5.09	+11.80%
LS Tractor	4.77	4.25	3.99	4.88	5.03	4.86	5.46	5.64	5.39	4.64	4.8	4.21	4.11	4.77	-6.68%
Mahindra	3.98	3.5	3.41	4.47	4.17	3.19	4.3	4.62	4.6	3.94	3.78	3.89	3.85	3.98	+15.29%
TYM	4.67	4.05	3.94	4.62	5.26	4.05	5.24	5.49	5.57	4.41	4.68	4.49	4.26	4.67	-0.07%
Yanmar	5.05	4.38	4.31	4.29	4.98	5.21	5.94	5.4	6.13	5.25	4.96	4.88	4.92	5.05	-2.60%
Grand Total	4.71	4.14	3.99	4.65	4.98	4.48	5.33	5.33	5.50	4.70	4.58	4.50	4.37		

Note: Green = highest score in that category; Red = lowest score Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence

### Small Tractor Summary of % Change 2023 vs 2024

	Product & Parts Availability Score	Product & Parts Availability % Change	Product & Parts Quality Score	Product & Parts Quality % Change	Administrative Programs & Protocols Score	Administrative Programs & Protocols % Change
Kioti	5.30	+13.63%	5.78	+7.94%	4.78	-0.39%
LS Tractor	5.25	+7.03%	5.43	+0.37%	4.41	-6.34%
Mahindra	3.91	+2.09%	4.45	+3.61%	3.83	-8.49%
TYM	4.77	+11.45%	5.41	+16.49%	4.35	-1.96%
Yanmar	5.31	+10.87%	6.04	+1.34%	4.71	+0.40%

Source: North American Equipment Dealers Assn.'s 2024 Dealer-Manufacturer Relations Survey; Ag Equipment Intelligence





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# 5 Key Blind Spots Costing Your Dealership Money

Bob Clements & Sara Hey identify practices that can boost profitability in dealerships

By Landon Swan, Editorial Intern

**B**ob Clements of Bob Clements International and President of Business Development, Sara Hey, have valuable information on improving dealership performance. There are five blind spots that can often cause dealerships to unintentionally lose revenue, they say.

“Inside of dealerships right now, there are a lot of different things that are vying for your attention, and it's really easy to have blind spots in the midst of this, where we're just stepping over cash over and over again,” says Hey. “Recognizing and evaluating current practices is the initial step toward resolving these issues.”

Here are the 5 blind spots:

**1 Understanding the Importance of Triaging.** Triaging allows dealers to assess equipment upon arrival and prepare for repairs in advance, which can significantly reduce service times and improve customer satisfaction.

Rather than waiting until you're ready to start working on it and then looking at it and saying, oh, I got a tractor that needs a new clutch or it needs bevel gears for the transmission ... why not do that sooner?” Clements says.

Hey adds another crucial dimension to managing dealerships by emphasizing the need to view time as a form of inventory. “Your inventory that you have in the service department expires

at the end of every single day, and you buy it eight pieces at a time,” she says. “What is your inventory? It is time.”

Even minor inefficiencies can lead to substantial financial losses over time. Losing one hour a day in the service department costs \$66,000 annually at ‘Sara’s Magical Dealership,’ according to Hey.

**2 Pricing & Managing Parts Strategically.** Making sure that you are listing your parts at a profitable price is something that should be strongly considered when running a dealership.

Clements recommends dealers move beyond relying solely on Manufacturer’s Suggested Retail Price (MSRP). “MSRP is based upon that part being sold a minimum of four times a year,” he says. “If you only sell that part three times a year, MSRP doesn’t work anymore.”

Some people treat MSRP as a rule instead of a suggestion, so Clements says pricing strategies should be more flexible, using different tools or ways to analyze potential profitability. There are multiple ways to do this, such as pricing matrix and velocity pricing to adjust prices based on parts turnover and market competition.

Managing your parts inventory effectively is very important as well, says Hey. Inefficient parts management, particularly if technicians pull their own parts, can result in lost revenue and inaccurate inventory tracking.

“Having technicians look and pull their own parts is the most expensive thing that you can have those technicians do inside of the parts department,” she says.

**3 Selling in Bundles.** Hey says offering bundles and having everything in one place that the customer may need takes tension out of their buying experience and keeps them away from shopping with your competitors. She uses the fast food industry to explain the benefits of bundling:

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"You can buy a cheeseburger and if you wanted to go to McDonald's to get a Diet Coke because it's superior than all other Diet Cokes, that's fine," says Hey. "Then, you go over to Freddy's to get the fries because you want to make a good choice, you could do that, but it brings friction into the experience. It's much easier if you say that you're just going to get a meal."

#### **4 Sales & Marketing Alignment.**

Clements stressed the importance of high sales activity, likening it to baseball: "Selling is about activity. It's like baseball, the more times you get up to bat, the higher probability you're going to get on base."

He also advises sales teams to track their performance metrics. If one sale equals \$10,000, it took me five walk-arounds or five quotes to get one sale," Clements says. Now I know that each walk-around or each quote is worth \$2,000."

Just because a few sales fall through shouldn't mean you stop trying to sell a certain product or service. Continue

to pursue customers to purchase the product and maybe even increase your efforts, he says.

Hey complements Clements' statements with a critique of reactionary marketing practices. She argues that effective marketing requires a strategic approach.

"Marketing is effective if we are not just reacting to the marketing, but that we have a plan in place to attack the marketing," she says.

It is important to plan marketing strategies in advance to avoid ineffective, last-minute campaigns.

There needs to be clear metrics for evaluating marketing effectiveness. "The only thing that matters in marketing is lead generation," Clements says. "If they're not doing things that generate leads, your marketing is not working."

**5 Hiring the Right People.** Hiring the right personnel is something that applies to every business. "The hardest thing to get rid of is a body, so don't bring them on if you don't have

to," Clements says. He also stresses that hiring decisions should be based on qualifications and potential fit rather than merely filling positions. Additionally, salaries should align with departmental gross profits rather than overall revenue to maintain financial health.

Clements says job descriptions should include performance requirements linked to compensation. "Every job description should have a performance requirement to it," he says. This ensures that salaries reflect performance, enhancing overall dealership efficiency.

Addressing these five blind spots can significantly impact a dealership's profitability. As Clements puts it, "The easiest place to start on getting things right is always in the service department." By focusing on these areas, dealerships can better manage resources, improve service quality and enhance overall financial performance.

For more details, including access to additional resources, the webinar is available on the *Rural Lifestyle Dealer* website. **RLD**



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# Dealing with Politics in Sales

By Tim Brannon, Contributing Writer

**M**any decades ago, the TV show Gilligan's Island was a hit. We all remember the group who could build anything out of coconuts but could not patch a small hole in their boat. One of the episodes found a 'jungle boy' who had mysteriously arrived on the island. They'd developed a plan to send him off in a balloon to Hawaii to give their location, viability and allow them to be rescued.

While planning, everyone had different ideas. As each pitched their different proposals, Gilligan would proclaim "that's a good point" at the conclusion of the thoughts.

The Skipper stated "Gilligan, not everyone can have a good point" — to which Gilligan replied, "YOU have a good point!"

Today's political environment likewise yields many good points put forward from all ranges of political belief.

As we talk to our customers, just about everyone asks, "Did you see or hear what so and so politician or newscaster said?"

As we try to apolitically answer, we desperately search

which camp one comes from so the customer doesn't have objections to buying from us.

Many years ago, a pastor was in the showroom when a young Mennonite man drove up in a shiny black pickup. As he entered the door, the pastor commented on what a pretty new pick-up he was driving. The young man replied that the unit wasn't new — it was just repainted from its original red.

The pastor then asked him if his church supported missionaries to which the young man replied they did, and that he was just about to embark on a lengthy mission trip himself.

He was then asked, "Well don't you think our Lord would have been better served to drive the pickup red and have given the paint job money to your missions?"

The reply was a stammering explanation of himself as he exited the door and drove off. I then told the pastor he might have had a valid point, but from now on please let people buy something first, before you run them off!

Are we two faced, lily livered, wimps in our political stance as salespersons? You bet (or should be!). I have had face to face conversations with neo-socialists to the harshest conservatives. I listened, biting my tongue so bad I could taste the blood, while thinking all the time, "Why

did I start this or how can I end it without blowing the sale?"

The old Gilligan line of "that's a good point" is the best answer we have discovered.

Never in history have we witnessed what transpired this year in U.S. politics and what is still to come. Keeping the naysayers and negative attitudes from permeating our jobs as a professional sales force is going to be a critical role in success.

Every election for centuries has predicted the end of the world if a certain someone was elected. Each generation has the following young-uns 'going to the dogs.' Writings from the ancient Romans even echoed such — OK maybe a bad illustration — but the results

are always the same; life goes on.

There was an old war time saying, "Loose Lips Sink Ships." Today with a nation split 50/50 on party lines, let's make sure our political actions don't sink the sale of tractors.

'Til next time — wishing your party wins and you profitably sell truckloads of equipment. **RLD**



*After graduating from Murray State University, Tim Brannon joined Allis-Chalmers Farm Equipment in 1975 as Territory Manager. After 3.5 years, he returned home to his Tennessee roots to lead B&G Equipment, Paris, Tenn., where he serves today as dealer-principal of the Massey Ferguson operation. In addition to contributing to Lessiter Media's Farm Equipment, No-Till Farmer and Rural Lifestyle Dealer properties, he writes the Rural Lifestyle Dealer blog, Equipment Dealer Tips, Tales & Takeaways.*

**Keeping the naysayers and negative attitudes from permeating our jobs as a professional sales force is going to be a critical role in success...**

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Told from the perspective of an in-the-trenches owner/operator — Tim Brannon of B&G Equipment, Paris, Tenn. — Equipment Dealer Tips, Tales & Takeaways shares knowledge, experiences and tips/lessons with fellow rural equipment dealerships throughout North America. Covering all aspects required of an equipment dealership general manager, Brannon will inform, entertain and provide a teachable moment for current — and future — leaders within equipment dealerships. Here are some of his latest blogs:

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# How the Auction & Retail Markets Influence Each Other

**T**he retail market and the auction market are not separate entities; they are intricately linked, influencing each other in a dynamic interplay of supply and demand.

This complex relationship was particularly evident during the economic downturn from 2014 to 2017 when high inventory levels and falling commodity prices drove buyers to seek out lower-priced options.

**Leasing Boom.** From 2014 to 2017, the farm equipment market experienced a leasing boom, with a record number of leases written for both new and used equipment. Creative financing options emerged, offering buyers affordable payment terms ranging from 1-5 years.

At the end of these leases, machines were typically returned to the lessor, which could be a manufacturer's captive finance arm, a local bank or an agricultural lender.

During this period, high inventory levels meant that the largest owners of used equipment were not dealers but manufacturing captive lending arms, banks and agricultural lenders.

These organizations held billions of dollars' worth of inventory, which was only visible to a few entities. In contrast, today, dealers are the largest owners of used equipment.

As inventory levels surged, buyers began to explore auctions in addition to dealer lots. For example, if a dealer was selling a combine for \$175,000, and the same machine could be bought at auction for \$100,000 or \$125,000, buyers would

often opt for the auction. Several factors influenced this decision beyond price, including trade-in equity positions and comfort levels with auction purchases.

**The 120% Rule.** A critical threshold was observed: when the retail price exceeded the auction value by more than 120%, buyers predominantly sought out auction prices. From

2017-20, the retail and auction markets aligned more closely, with retail prices averaging 115% to 107.5% of auction values. Despite this alignment, the auction market remained active due to high supply and ample buyer options.

The COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-23 disrupted this balance. During

the pandemic, auction prices often exceeded 120% of retail prices on dealer lots. This was partly due to dealerships holding back equipment to ensure availability for local customers during emergency breakdowns. The scarcity of supply and high demand led to what was termed the "scarcity premium," with prices soaring by 30-60%.

Today, various factors, including commodity prices, interest rates and inflation, are influencing current market conditions. Supply has caught up with demand, giving buyers options reminiscent of the last downturn.

The auction and retail markets are out of sync again, with retail-to-auction values exceeding 120% for combines, tractors, sprayers and planters. High new equipment prices are reflected in used equipment values, which are traded daily as commodities. Consequently, losses on equipment at auction can be significant, affecting both dealers and end-users.

Current used inventory levels are comparable to those in 2021-22 and are expected to grow through 2025. Levels may reach those of 2019-20 before stabilizing in late 2025 or early 2026.

The auction market is anticipated to continue driving down retail prices until a new equilibrium is reached, though this "new normal" may differ from past market conditions. Used inventory will compete directly with upgrades, impacting the overall market health. **FE**



*Casey Seymour is the founder of Moving Iron LLC, which hosts an annual meeting for remarketing managers. Visit [MovingIronLLC.com](https://movingironllc.com)*

*for more information. He can be reached at [casey.seymour@movingironllc.com](mailto:casey.seymour@movingironllc.com)*

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Efficiently Moving Grain

## GTT5010 BAGGER

### REDESIGNED AND IMPROVED FOR 2024

Maximize profits and improve harvest efficiency by skipping lines at the elevator and storing directly in the field with Akron's grain bagging system. **In stock now at Busch Equipment.**



EASY-LIFT SYSTEM



UPGRADED AUGER



LARGEST HOPPER



HYDRAULIC PAN



### SPECIFICATIONS

HOPPER DIMENSIONS: 132" X 112" X 34"  
AUGER TUBE DIAMETER: 24"  
CAPACITY: 51,442 BU/H  
BAG COMPATIBILITY: 10 X 500 BAGS

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