

Agriculture celebrating its horsepower

National Ag Week, March 20-25

By Christine Farazi

Agriculture Council of America
From a team of horses in the early 1900s to tractors with the power of 40 to 300 horses today, American farmers provide consumers with more and better quality food than ever before.

In fact, one farmer now supplies food for about 129 people in the United States and abroad compared with just 25.8 people in 1960.

The efficiency of American farmers pays off in the price American consumers pay for food as well. U.S. consumers spend roughly 9 percent of their income on food compared with 11 percent in the United Kingdom, 17 percent in Japan, 27 percent in South Africa and 53 percent in India. This great value is due in large part to improved equipment efficiency, enhanced crop and livestock genetics through biotechnology and conventional breeding, and advances in information management.

All Americans are asked to enjoy and admire the wonders of Ameri-

can agriculture as National Agriculture Week is celebrated March 20-25.

Equipment changes boost farm output

Today's farmers work nearly three-and-one-half times more land than their predecessors from 1900. Their needs are different, the crops are different and the rules governing production practices are different.

"There is an on-going consolidation in agriculture that results in fewer farmers farming more acres," says Doug DeVries, Sr. Vice President Agricultural Marketing for North America, Australia and Asia at John Deere in Moline, Ill. "Their needs for equipment are changing. Their expectations for what the equipment will do for their farming operation are also changing."

DeVries adds that John Deere has had three of its largest product introductions ever in the last four years - despite tough economic times. "We've almost revamped our entire product line to provide more efficient production solutions for

farmers," he says. "When we sell a planter, we're really selling the ability to plant a crop. Farmers want solutions in the form of bigger, faster equipment that provides them with better information about their farming operations."

Information Management Aids in Food Safety.

Production efficiency

John Deere also provides technology services to farmers that include wireless information transfer and satellite guidance systems for driving equipment. With JD Link farmers can have information about their equipment and production operations transferred directly from the equipment in the field to a Web site for easy access later. This can greatly improve their efficiency and increase the life of their equipment by ensuring more timely maintenance.

GreenStar AutoTrac is a satellite guidance system introduced to farmers by John Deere in 2002 and expanded in 2003. This assisted steering system is extremely accurate (within 4-inches pass to pass accuracy) and guides the tractor in a straight line down the row. The

operator still turns the tractor at the end of each pass, and must also steer around obstacles such as trees, ditches, and waterways. This technology helps farmers by reducing fatigue and benefits consumers by reducing input costs so the end product costs less when it reaches the retail shelf.

Overall, new technology, such as Field Doc, an agronomic data collection system that uses KeyCard software and three common GreenStar components, provides farmers with better, more timely information to ensure quality, efficient crop production. The information infrastructure also allows growers to track their crops and the production processes used to produce those crops better. A key factor as biotechnology and traceability of specific crop varieties become even more important in food production.

Biotechnology increases capacity, product quality

Biotechnology is another factor in the efficiency of American farmers and their ability to provide more.

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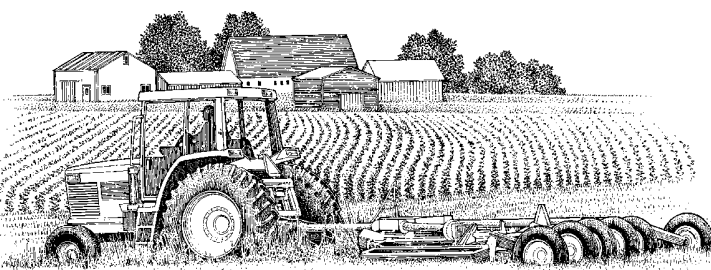
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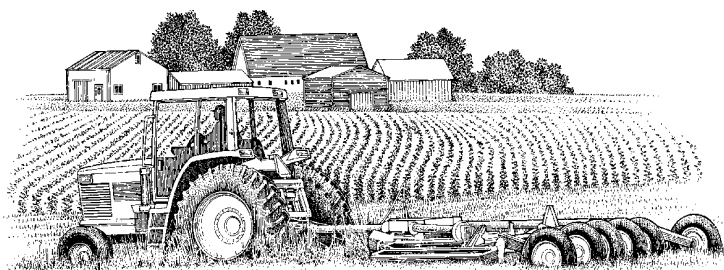
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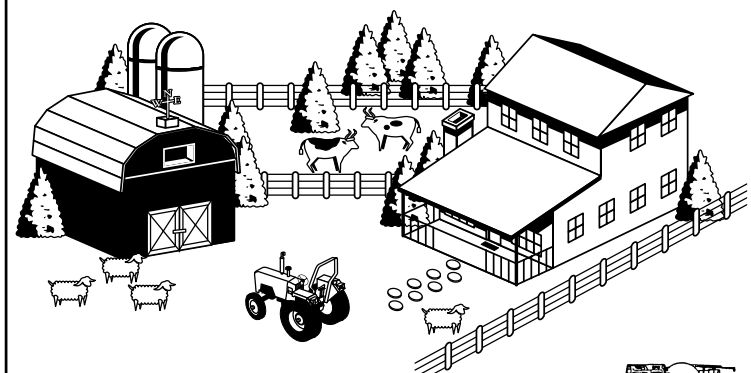
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