Europe proving a bonanza for some

France and Germany still hot spots but boom may be over
By Bob Spivak

American companies involved with golf see a bright future in the European community. With varying amounts of experience and market penetration overseas, executives of golf-oriented companies, or subsidiaries, reached consensus on two points: France and Germany are the hottest markets for golf right now, and the "boom" in European golf may be over.

On the latter point, Charlie Barebo, vice president of sales at Otterbine-Barebo, doesn't agree. As a manufacturer of water aeration products, he sees the market still expanding. Having been in the Euromarket for four years, Barebo said his company "has planted the seeds" to what he sees as an eventual crop.

His optimism makes sense. Curt Kimpebeck, director of international sales at Jacobsen, cited growing signs of a world recession. Among causes of a golf slowdown is the "green" or ecological movement. Since Otterbine aerators reclaim water, that segment of the market seems to be in concert with ecologists' worries over excess water consumption and polluting transportation.

Kimpebeck said his company's primary strength is in golf course maintenance. Jacobsen, he said, introduced the first diesel-powered triple green mower several years ago. While it is still resisted in the United States, he noted that it was a hit overseas because of the lower price of diesel versus gasoline and more stringent regulations placed on gasoline storage in Europe than in America.

Knute Jacobsen, founder of the company, contacted "someone in Switzerland" in the 1980s, and the company has had a firm foothold since, with about 30 percent of sales in Europe and Great Britain.

"The market (in Europe) is so huge that if you manufacture a good product, the potential is always there," Kimpebeck said. It depends on the product. While optimistic, American turf seed distributors are frustrated by regulations on their products that they feel constitute trade barriers.

Mike Robinon of Seed Research of Oregon in Corvallis, Ore., said the licensing procedures for U.S. seeds "to a certain degree is a trade barrier. The Dutch have dominated the market for years."

said Bill Rose, president of Oregon's Tee-2-Green, marketers of the Penn variety bentgrasses, "We've been working really hard the last four years to crack that market."

Rain Bird unveils Maxi certification

GLENDORA, Calif. — Rain Bird Golf Sales, Inc., manufacturer of irrigation systems for golf courses, has unveiled the first multi-level certification program for the MAXI Computer Water Management System.

Designed to help golf course superintendents become more proficient in the daily use of their irrigation control systems, the four-level institutional course covers all aspects of MAXI operation, from computer basics to advanced schedule writing, detailed database implementation and diagnostic troubleshooting.

The first three certification levels consist of comprehensive seminars which cover various aspects of MAXI operation. The fourth level is an instructor level for irrigation consultants and others desiring to teach MAXI's many water management features to end users.

Level 1 participants must understand the basics of golf irrigation design, computer operation and fundamentals of DOS. Course exercises cover computer operating and MAXI basics, including schedule and database structures, writing schedules, hardware hookup and software loading. Level 2 spans weather station interface.

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Many firms cashing in on lucrative European market

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"While the boom has peaked, the popularity of golf in Europe is just taking off, resort and resident courses alike."
— Mike Robinson
Seed Research of Oregon

"France is the hottest in a cooling market."

Young's focus appears to be on Berlin, an area he sees with the potential of burgeoning golf. Now that East and West are one, the region, and what once was "no man's land," offer land and populace to expand golf. Germany, he said, has the best chance to jump-start itself forward. Rainbird's regional managers and staffs are natives to the countries in which they work—a Spaniard in Spain, a German in Germany and so on. Young feels this produces not only market savvy personnel, but people who are broad-based and culturally and linguistically sensitive to their markets.

O. M. Scott of Marysville, Ohio, markets about 20 pro-turf fertilizers and a commercial spreader line in Europe. International business manager Kerbin Riley found France and Germany the greatest potential golf markets. Pursuing business in the 13 West European countries, he said company involvement in the former Eastern Bloc countries is "not something we are rushing." Riley's sense of the European market is that it is still growing rapidly but put in perspective, should not be overstated. There were many years, he said, when nothing happened. He acknowledges a steady growth in business for his company. He also is "very optimistic" about the coming former East German market. "We are going to continue to place a focus there, looking for good things in the future."

Owen Towne of Ciba-Geigy said the Europeans, particularly the French, do not pursue high maintenance turf chemicals. His company, reputedly the world's largest in agricultural chemicals, has had some frustration in this regard.

He cited France as a country heavily into ornamental plantings, without a lot of emphasis on turf. He stated: "Europe is going through a growth phase as we did years ago. We're trying to convince them to get into the turf market, so far without much success."

Definite optimism for the future of the European golf market was tempered somewhat by the two seed companies. They see the subsidizing of Dutch growers and restrictive "approved lists" as a hindrance to doing business.

And while France and Germany may be the current darlings in the expanding golf arena, the Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, are not being overlooked by American seedsmen.

And, the once-isolated "communist" nations in Eastern Europe, perhaps after drifting into a capitalist economy, present another market opportunity.

A trade show in Warsaw or Belgrade? In goldolm, anything is possible.

Biosys, Archer Daniels reach mfg. agreement

PALO ALTO, Calif. — Biosys, a manufacturer of environmentally safe biological pesticide products, has reached manufacturing agreement with Archer Daniels Midland Co.'s (ADM's) biochem products division.

The companies will mass-produce nematodes, insect-killing biological pesticides, at ADM's newly constructed biochemical facility in Decatur, Ill.

ADM will provide facilities and operation personnel, Biosys on-site technical staffing and expertise in nematode production technology.

Nematodes, microscopic organisms that kill a host of insect pests, are the active component in Biosys' family of biological insecticide products. Harmless to humans, plants and animals, they leave no harmful residue in soil or groundwater, and as such are exempt from EPA registration requirements.

ADM is an $8-billion producer of food and feed ingredients.

MAXI

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ET concept, database computing and editing, and advanced scheduling, writing and sensor functions. Level 3 covers flow management table structure. Detailed implementation of databases, such as acquisition and validation of flow zone and branch zone data, is included.

The Instructor Level program is based upon obtaining a Level 3 certification and the submission of applicant's teaching materials, training aids and other documentation of MAXI certification teaching skills.

For more information, contact Cozy Regele at Rain Bird Golf Sales, Inc., 145 North Grand Ave., Glendora, Calif. 91740 or call 818-852-7353.