LAS CRUCES, N.M. — Royalties, continue to accrue from sales of a seeded Bermudagrass developed at New Mexico State University.

Third-year sales of NuMex Sahara, sold exclusively by Farmers Marketing Corporation of Phoenix, have generated royalties of $102,187 for New Mexico State. The New Mexico Crop Improvement Association (NMICIA) recently accepted the check at NMSU's Gerald Thomas Hall.

"The major portion of that royalty will be distributed back to NMSU's Agricultural Experiment Station for research and other distribution within the College of Agriculture and Home Economics," explained Charles Glover, NMICIA administrative officer.

NuMex Sahara is designed for use on golf courses, sports arenas, parks, playfields, grounds, military bases, cemeteries, home lawns and highway rights-of-way. The grass has been planted in 17 states and more than 40 countries.

The Bermudagrass variety is noted for its drought tolerance, dark green color and medium fine texture. NuMex Sahara, which was developed after more than 20 years of NMSU research, was designed not to grow as tall as other Bermuda strains.

"Hell, yes!" Barebo said with a laugh. "Here we are, a family-owned business up against a company selling $1 billion worth of product. I don't feel threatened by it, but I'm alerted by it. It's made us more competitive. It's made us a better company."

"The big advantage we have, as a small company, is we make decisions very quickly and implement them very quickly. We also have a loving relationship with our distributors. Now, not all of our distributors would say that. But we consider them family, and we're going to use that to beat the hell out of Toro." Barebo is quick to point out, however, that all firms reach agreements of this type, though not necessarily on the same scale. The relationship between O/B and its distributors is also a partnership, he pointed out.

"Seventy percent of all our distributors are also Toro distributors, all independently operated," he added. "And the feedback we're getting is, they're happy with our product and service. Many aren't taking on the Aeromix line."

Gross and Barebo disagree on many things, but they agree the golf industry will witness the creation of similar partnerships with increasing frequency. Last spring, Toro added Bio Huma Netics, a bio-tech liquid fertilizer manufacturer, to its list of "junior partners." This year alone, biosys — a small producer of biological pesticides — has forged separate marketing relationships with three heavy hitters in the chemical industry, Ciba-Geigy, Archer Daniel Midland and Sandoz.

"I think it's definitely a trend," said Gross. "All you have to do is look at today's world. They just built a Walgreens next to my house. They sell pizza now!"

"You have to realize you can't develop all this stuff on your own. There isn't enough time in the marketplace anymore. Toro doesn't have five years to develop an aeration line. They need it today."