

BRIEFS



LESCO BOOSTS KOSSIN, NOVAK



Susan Novak

CLEVELAND, — Lesco Inc. has named Kenneth Kossin, Jr. to controller and Susan Novak to manager, investor communications. Kossin joined

Lesco's accounting team in 1989 and has been recognized for his contributions in his various roles from manager of financial reporting to assistant controller. He will be responsible for all accounting, budgeting, planning, and tax functions at Lesco. Novak joined Lesco in August 1996 and has developed a role in investor communications to support the information needs of LESCO's current shareholders and potential investors.

TORO'S ALAMO NAMED AREA MANAGER

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — The Toro Co. named Eladio Alamo area manager for the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico, where he will oversee sales for turf maintenance equipment and irrigation systems. Alamo brings a broad knowledge of Toro's products and distribution channel to his new position. He previously served as manager of the consumer and commercial products for Casco Sales Co. Inc., a Toro distributor in Puerto Rico. In addition, he was territory manager for Latin America and the Caribbean for B.C.S. America before joining Casco.

LASCO BRINGS TWO ON BOARD

BROWNSVILLE, Tenn. — Lasco Fluid Distribution Products has named Chuck Nichols as its new regional sales manager for the northeast. Nichols spent the last 10 years as owner of a manufacturer's representative agency serving the Ohio and Michigan markets. The company has also named Charles Herndon as its new production scheduling manager. Herndon spent the last 16 years with Emerson Hermetic Motor Division in Humboldt, Tenn., where he served as production control manager and quality assurance manager.

FINE LAWN JUMPS UP ON WEB

LAKE OSWEGO, Ore. — In response to a growing number of requests for company information, Fine Lawn Research Inc. has gone online at www.finelawn.com. The company said the site will support customers service efforts by linking its distributors nationwide.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Arizona-based ryegrass issue up in the air

By MICHAEL LEVANS

PHOENIX — A controversy that Oregon seed companies thought was put to bed has been stirred yet again.

In mid-August, a group representing Arizona wheat farmers asked the Arizona state Agriculture Department to reconsider its decision to allow ryegrass planting on golf courses this winter.

In July, the Arizona Farm Bureau Federation asked Agriculture Director Sheldon Jones to ban ryegrass seed from Oregon, the nation's largest supplier, unless it is certified to be free of the fungus believed to cause Karnal bunt.

The request was the latest attempt by Arizona farmers at lifting restrictions imposed by the federal government. According to recent reports, last year's federal quarantine on Arizona wheat cost the industry \$100 million, while Karnal bunt was found in less than 4 percent of the state's fields.



Oregon's Department of Agriculture recently met with Arizona. The consensus was to wait until findings were gathered from a bunt and smut disease symposium that took place on August 18-20 in Washington DC.

"The Arizona wheat growers want help in getting this zero tolerance of Karnal bunt removed for exporting," said Michael Robinson, president of Corvallis, Ore.-based Seed Research of Oregon Inc. "They have a lot of wheat in storage that they can't ship."

William Walsh, president of the Rio Verde Country Club in northwest Phoenix, said Arizona's economy would have been hard hit by a ryegrass ban.

"The financial impact to the state would be devastating," Walsh said. "We don't

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NEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

LANCASTER, Pa. — Millcreek Manufacturing has introduced its Model 1050 turf core aerator. With a coring width of 102 inches, the new aerator penetrates soil up to 3 inches depending on soil conditions, and can treat nearly 225,000 sq. ft. of turf area per hour. The 1050 comes with a choice of 20 or 30 tine assemblies and is available with three-point hitch mounting, or as a tow-behind with hydraulic lifting control. The operator can add weights to the built-in weight rack to adjust the tine penetration depth suitable for specific soil conditions. For more information, contact Millcreek Manufacturing Company at 800-879-6507. If you're getting ready for fall clean up and winter prep, take a look at the extended product listings, page 31.

Fertilizer makers dig in for battle

IMC Vigoro restructures, increases distribution's role

By MICHAEL LEVANS

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — In the midst of increasingly intense competition, IMC Vigoro's Professional Products Group, the maker of fertilizers and slow-release products, has eliminated its entire internal direct sales force and has axed its unprofitable product lines in an effort to concentrate on R&D.

"It's a move that reflects that the industry is very competitive," said Tom Pasztor, director of communications for IMC Global Inc., parent company of IMC Vigoro. "Our customers are

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Tessenderlo Kerley refigures to get closer to customers

PHOENIX — Tessenderlo Kerley Inc., the maker of liquid specialty fertilizers for the golf course and agriculture industries, has reorganized its Agriculture Group in an effort to get closer to its customers worldwide.

According to Gerald Kolb, group vice president, the former bottom-up geographic sales structure of the company no longer fully addressed the needs of the company's distributors and dealers.

"There has been a tremendous amount of consolidation within the distribution channels of our industry in recent years," said Kolb. "We are keenly aware that to grow our position effectively in the future, we need to better meet the needs of our customers in the United States and abroad with a customer-centered sales and distribution network"

Now, instead of each Kerley representative maintaining a region, reps will be assigned by company. "It's a more centralized approach," said Brian Lawrence, Kerley's director of communications.

Under the reorganization, Kolb will lead the management which includes five teams responsible for different market segments.

Mike Buffington has been named vice president of domestic sales. Reporting to Buffington are three geographically-centered national account managers: Ron Johnson, west; Bill Morris, central; and Garon Steward, east.

Domestic sales will be supported by five account managers in the field who work directly with dealers and retailers. These account managers include Chuck Albrecht, western states and Canada; Val Mitchell, north central states and Canada; Kelly Sears, southern states; Don McNinch, southeastern states; and Jan

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VALDERRAMA NOW STRICTLY TORO

CADIZ, Spain — The number of exclusive turf equipment provider deals between course operators and manufacturers are on the rise. Valderrama recently entered its deal with Toro — now more are on the horizon. See cover story details on latest deals by Toro and Ransomes.

Toro, Ransomes

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Hotels to be exclusive provider of turf equipment and maintenance for Whitbread's eight existing courses and two currently in development. Ransomes will be the exclusive manufacturer and maintainer for the eight courses under the watchful eye of Myrtle Beach National Co.

Toro already has agreements on the books with Canadian Pacific Hotel Group and Valderrama, the home of this month's Ryder Cup matches. For Ransomes, Myrtle Beach is its fifth contract.

From an administrative standpoint, the deals seem to make sense. From the management side, companies get a total package which helps cash flow and the company's yearly budgeting process. From the manufacturer's side, the company can easily track equipment maintenance records, allowing the equipment maker to take a piece of equipment back and keep it in circulation with more confidence.

Outside the financial benefits, the deals create "a mutually beneficial comfort level" between the two parties, said Peter Whurr, director of marketing at Ransomes. "When you put a deal together,

the customer benefits because he knows he now has a direct route into the company. It's more of a business partnership, even though he's still the customer. We can now say, 'If you want some help, just call us.'"

"It allows us to put together a total package," said Don Masini, managing director of international sales at Toro. "Following that, it's easier for us to follow up and keep in contact with the customer in order to meet all their needs," Masini said.

According to Masini, the exclusive provider deal was an American concept that



is growing, and will continue to snowball, overseas, where management group ownership is skyrocketing.

"Outside the U.S., there're aren't that many that are pay and play. So funding is getting more difficult," said Masini. "If you don't have the funds then you can't improve the golf course, and the members don't want to increase the dues they're paying."

"It's about achieving a comfort level for everyone involved," said Whurr. "We sat with them [Myrtle Beach National Co.] around a table, asked them what they needed and how we could get there. It was the first stage of a closer relationship."

For Myrtle Beach National, the issue boiled down to cost and time savings. "We realized we were spending too much time and money on the repairs of equipment we had kept too many years," said Clay Brittain Jr., chairman of Myrtle Beach National. "This caused a lot of downtime. When we decided to bring our equipment up to date, Ransomes came to us with an exceptional package."

"When a management company enters into one of these agreements it's almost like leasing a car," added Toro's Masini. "At the end of the agreement, they can walk away and get a new one or they can purchase it. Either way, it keeps new or well-maintained equipment on the course."

Masini believes exclusive partnerships are simply going to snowball. Whurr heartily agrees.

"There's a much better relationship between the two parties," said Whurr, who added that Ransomes currently has a number of deals in the pipeline.

IMC Vigoro

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demanding better quality products, more innovative products. To improve the profitability of the business, we're going to take that money and plow it into R&D as well as additional quality improvements."

Vigoro said that its Professional Products Group will now only market through a network of 70 worldwide distributors supported by a veteran sales team.

"Our link to the customers will now be through the distributors," said Pasztor. "We believe that to be a much more efficient way to do business. These are established distributors, so nothing will skip a beat," Pasztor said.

In addition, the company has stopped manufacturing its "low-volume, marginal products." This, the company said, will permit it to concentrate on its most popular products, those responsible for more than 90 percent of its net sales, such as Par Ex and Woodace.

"The products eliminated were high specialty products that accounted for less than 10 percent of total sales," said Pasztor. "The lionshare of what a golf course superintendent has come to count on from IMC Vigoro will continued to be produced."

"These actions are expected to improve the Professional Products Group's profitability and enable it to more aggressively pursue new product development and quality improvements," said Frank Wilson, IMC Vigoro's president. "Our objective is to serve our customers better, reduce our costs and position the business for long-term industry leadership. We believe this restructuring will accomplish that goal."

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