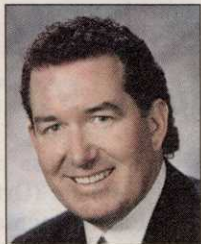


BRIEFS



**WHITACRE JOINS SIMPLOT**

POSTFALLS, Idaho — Bill Whitacre has been named president of Simplot Turf and Horticulture succeeding Doyle Jackson, who retired May 5. Whitacre will be responsible for business operations and financial matters. Before joining Simplot Whitacre served 24 years with Research Seeds, a St. Joseph, Mo., firm engaged in the development, production and marketing of proprietary forage and turf seed.



Bill Whitacre

**TORO NAMES DANIELSON**

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — The Toro Co. has named Paul Danielson finance marketing manager for the Commercial Division where he will oversee the development and execution of all strategic and finance programs for golf and grounds customers and Toro distributors. He comes to Toro from New Holland Credit Co., where he was responsible for finance programs for more than 600 agricultural and industrial dealerships.

**PTI reshuffles management deck**

Higgins to focus on PTI Tour, product development

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SYLACAUGA, Ala. — In order to concentrate efforts on expanding Purcell Technologies' (PTI) ambitious PTI Tour training program, marketing director Jeff Higgins has taken the new post of director of market development. John Johnson, formerly vice president of sales for Scotts Professional Business Group, has taken over as the new marketing manager for the company.



Jeff Higgins

"Our marketing strategy is centered around the PTI Tour and I was spending the majority of my time doing it," said Higgins. "So we decided to create a new position and I have moved in to coordinate all of the tour activities and the development of new products. John has come in to take over the traditional marketing functions."



John Johnson

Johnson is excited to take the marketing reigns for PTI.

"The goal is to build POLYON to the number one brand in the U.S.," said Johnson. "All the other fertilizer companies are fighting for a share of the methylene urea market. By taking a coating technology and making it economically feasible, Purcell has carved out a niche market with POLYON."

**PTI TOUR**

Making customers aware of the POLYON technology is the purpose of the PTI Tour said Higgins.

"The hurdle we have for growing our business is that Polyon is so technical and we are perceived as being expensive," he said.

"The tour clears up confusion through education and takes them through

Continued on next page

**BASF to amend Curalan use on sod, not golf**

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C. — Following the tolerance reassessment of vinclozolin by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Food Quality Protection Act, BASF Agricultural Products has announced that it will amend the listing of vinclozolin uses supported by U.S. labeling. Vinclozolin is the active ingredient in Curalan and Ronilan fungicides.

However, according to a BASF official, the label amendments will not effect the golf course use of Curalan, a broad-spectrum fungicide used on dollar spot and brown patch.

"There will be no change on use patterns on golf courses," said Jerry Minore,

market manager, fungicides, at BASF. "It will effect other uses on sod farms and food crops but that is about it."

According to Minore, in its two-year reassessment of vinclozolin, the EPA was primarily concerned about dietary exposure and risks to children.

"Since sod is used on home lawns, they decided to restrict sod use," he said. "But there is no major shift for golf."

This year there will be an imposition of a 24-day pre-transplant interval for turf sod, and further refinement of turf and ornamental labeling will be released later this year.

— Andrew Overbeck

**Novartis to divest FLINT, Compass**

By ANDREW OVERBECK

BASEL, Switzerland — The merger between Novartis' crop protection and seeds division and AstraZeneca's agrochemicals business is pressing forward as both companies have been forced by U.S. and European regulatory agencies to divest certain product lines. While AstraZeneca plans to divest its worldwide acetochlor corn herbicide, Novartis' divestment will directly impact golf course superintendents.



As a preliminary step in its planned merger to create Syngenta, Novartis Agribusiness has put its worldwide FLINT business up for sale. The decision was based on Federal Trade Commission (FTC) concerns that the combined companies would have a monopoly on the market for strobilurin fungicides.

FLINT, which is also known as Compass, has been commercially available in Switzerland, South Africa, Norway and the United States since 1999 and entered the market in Great Britain, Germany and Belgium earlier this year. FLINT is a second-generation strobilurin with broad spectrum control and is used widely in the golf, lawn, landscape and ornamental markets.

"At the moment there are only two or three strobilurin products on the market," said Novartis spokesman

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## Simplot/ABT

Continued from page 1

ists, Inc. [the company in charge of the ABT sell-off] going back and forth," said Chris Claypool, senior vice president of marketing for the Jacklin Seeds business unit of J.R. Simplot. "At the end of the day it was decided that our consortium group was the final bid winner."

According to Claypool, the deal is expected to officially close by the end of July. "Right now we are working out the final details on the financial issues," he said.

Also at hand is how the Simplot group will divide the ABT varieties and distribution locations with the other members of the consortium, Kenneth Budd and Oregon-based Pro Seeds.

"ABT had more than 500 varieties and Simplot will condense these down to a manageable figure and different members [of the consortium] will represent the varieties and locations," said Claypool.

While he declined to comment on which varieties will be represented by which members of the consortium, Claypool did confirm that Jacklin Seeds will get Lofts' L-93 creeping bentgrass. To increase the reach of its BEST fertilizer division, Simplot will also take over distributors Las Vegas Fertilizer, Phoenix-based Garden West and Florence, Ky.-based George W. Hill.

"Our main interest [in ABT] was a few distribution locations to better service the market as well as our current distribution and to complement our current turfgrass program," Claypool said.

The deal marks the end of ABT's bold market share-driven slash-and-burn acquisitions strategy, by which it acquired 35 turfgrass companies in less than four years. Failure to consolidate eventually doomed ABT to bankruptcy, leading industry insiders to speculate that its business plan was focused more on running up its stock numbers in hopes that an outside company would buy them out. By the time the company began to consolidate, it was too late.

How will Simplot avoid a similar fate?

"We are looking at servicing our distribution with a complemented product line," said Claypool, "but we are not picking up ABT in its current stage. We are not picking up all the employees, operational charges, debts and accounts."

Simplot has been on the move lately, signing an exclusive distribution agreement for POLYON fertilizers with Sylcauga, Ala.-based Pursell Technologies, Inc. and purchasing TurfPartners, the distribution arm of Rancho Bernardo, Calif.-based Eco Soil

Systems, Inc. As part of the Turf Partners deal, Simplot will pay Eco Soil \$23 million and assume nearly \$17 million in bank debt and liabilities.

However, Simplot is continuing to scour the marketplace for more companies that fit into its strategic growth plan.

"There are a number of acquisitions that we are working on at the moment," said Claypool. ▶

## Novartis, Compass

Continued from page 23

Mark Hill. "One of them is a Zeneca product and one of them Novartis' FLINT. With the proposed merger, Syngenta would have both of these products, so the FTC has required us to sell the FLINT business. This is why we have announced that this business is for sale."

The planned sale comprises the entire worldwide FLINT business, including intellectual

property rights, patents, trademarks and registrations as well as the relevant production facilities in Muttentz, Switzerland. Novartis also expects the buyer to employ all of the approximately 90 FLINT employees.

"The product will not disappear," said Hill. "It will be transferred to a buyer who would be expected to take over the whole business."

The sale of FLINT will not take place until the merger is approved by the shareholders of Novartis and AstraZeneca and antitrust authorities. ▶



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