

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Bayer acquires Aventis for \$4.9 billion and debt

Bayer AG agreed to buy Aventis CropScience from Aventis and Schering AG for about \$4.9 billion and nearly \$2 billion in debt. The deal will double Bayer's existing crop protection business. The company expects to close the deal in the first quarter of 2002. The new company will be called Bayer CropScience. The deal still depends on European Union anti-trust approval.

Bayer will not assume liability for Aventis CropScience's genetically modified corn, StarLink. StarLink, approved only as animal feed, became a subject of international controversy when it was proved that it had become mixed with corn intended for human use.

Bayer CropScience will be headed by Jochen Wulff, currently general manager of Bayer's Crop Protection Business Group. The company will have headquarters in Monheim, Germany. The company will also maintain Aventis CropScience's two principal sites in Lyons, France, and Frankfurt, Germany.

Simplot acquires Eco Soil products; Becker acquires RhizUp

San Diego-based Simplot Partners acquired a group of products from Eco Soil Systems, including soil surfactants, wetting agents, spray dye indicators, foliar nutrients, biostimulants, spray adjuvants and tank cleaners. Some of the more than 40 products are:

- 6 Iron Plus (12-0-0), a liquid nitrogen fertilizer that contains 6 percent iron;
- Brilliance, which alleviates soil water repellency.
- Rely II, which is formulated to establish consistent water flow into and throughout the root zone; and
- Trident (4-0-1), which improves root

Briefs continue on page 18

The Buzz on Feedback

SUPERINTENDENTS CAME AWAY FROM TURF PROGRAM IMPRESSED WITH JOHN DEERE'S GPS TECHNOLOGY AND HYBRID GREENS MOWER

By Larry Aylward, Editor

There's green — as in John Deere green — roaming over the golf course. Look to the right, and you see Deere utility vehicles, fairway mowers and rough mowers. Look to the left, and you see Deere greens mowers, bunker rakes and aerators.

Welcome to Deere's annual Golf & Turf 2001 Feedback Program. For the past 10 years, Deere has invited superintendents from throughout the country to its headquarters in Moline, Ill., for a few days to test and review potential new equipment. In August, more than 400 superintendents came to Moline to see Deere's latest concepts.

Superintendents saw several new items, including a fairway mower with rotary cutting units, a diesel-powered triplex greens mower with an electric reel drive and Deere's global positioning system (GPS) technology.

Many superintendents examined the triplex greens mower with electric reel drive. The mower was quieter, lacking the whine usually associated with a hydraulic reel drive. "You can definitely hear a difference," one superintendent said.

Superintendents were intrigued by



JOHN DEERE/STEVE TRUSTY

The greensmower with electric reel drive was a popular attraction.

the mower because of its nonhydraulic reel drive, which eliminates the possibility of fluids leaks on greens.

Many superintendents were interested in Deere's GPS technology. Earlier this year, Deere announced it was shifting its GPS focus from golf cars to turf equipment. (The GPS is a government network of 24 satellites orbiting the earth that tracks the location of moving objects on the ground.)

"This is what I wanted to see," said Shelly Israelson, superintendent of Royal Palm Yacht & CC in Boca Raton, Fla., as he studied the GPS software on computers. "Soon we'll need a computer-science degree to work in this industry."

Israelson was joking, of course, and he's excited about the GPS's application to the industry.

Continued on page 16

Off The Fringe

Continued from page 14

"It's only going to benefit superintendents and anybody that deals with having to keep records," Israelson said. "Architects and contractors are using the GPS technology. It makes sense for us to start using it."

Mark Schmidt, Deere's senior project manager, was attending his fourth Feedback program and said more superintendents are gaining an interest in GPS. Deere touted its GPS spray record-keeping system, and fleet and service management program.

The former provides superintendents with the capability to record spatial spray applications automatically so they can manage and assess performance of applied products — and use the data to prove compliance with environmental regulations. The system's technology allows for a sprayer to capture information about a particular application. The information

is transferred in real time to a base station where a superintendent can record and analyze it.

"The system allows superintendents to keep historical records of all the applications they've done," Schmidt said.

The fleet and service management program features a preventative-



JOHN DEERE/STEVE TRUSTY

Superintendents are excited about the GPS spray record-keeping system.

maintenance hour meter that can be programmed with service intervals. "When the machine logs 25 hours, you can program it to be ready for an oil change," Schmidt explained.

E. Charles Ulevich, director of golf course maintenance for Hayfields CC and Turf Valley Resort Conference Center in Ellicott City, Md., said the GPS would likely become a tool superintendents can't do without. Ulevich said he played golf at a course whose GPS system would shut down golf cars if they strayed 10 feet from the cart path.

"It's phenomenal," he added.

Ulevich said he would use the system for record keeping of pesticides and fertilizers. Ulevich, who oversees 54 holes and 60 employees, would also use GPS to track maintenance vehicles.

"But tracking maintenance vehicles might keep you in the office too much," he added. "[GPS] is another tool that makes our lives easier, but it also has the potential to make you lazy."

Ulevich is also concerned about price and says cost will be the driving factor on whether GPS is widely used in the industry. "Like all technology, though, it will get cheaper in the future," he predicted.

Quotable

"Everybody from every walk of life has been affected by this in some way or another. You almost feel guilty trying to return to some normalcy. ... But you have to try to return to some sort of normal activity."

— Charlie Fultz, superintendent of Country Club of Culpeper (Va.), on the aftermath of Sept. 11

"We don't call it beer. We call it aiming juice."

— Vicky, our new favorite beverage cart girl from Woodland Hills GC in Eagle, Neb.

"We thoroughly enjoy listening to our guests talk, not about their golf games, but about the deer they saw across the fairway, the alligators they saw along the lakes or even the even raccoon that was snooping around their carts looking for goodies."

— Gary Meyers, manager of sports turf and golf course maintenance at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla.

November In Turfgrass Trends:

REMOTE DIAGNOSIS: Extension agents and other experts examining problem turf have only so many hours in a day and sometimes it's not possible to see a site firsthand. The remote diagnosis work being done at the University of Georgia promises to relieve the overworked specialists and speed diagnosis for problems that commonly beset turfgrass.

DISEASE STUDY: Even though the

weather did not cooperate (it was unusually cold this year in Central Pennsylvania), Penn State's Wakar Uddin gathered good data for his disease study and the effect of Insignia application on turfgrass. Let's just say the results are more interesting that Penn State's football season so far.

For more information, visit www.landscapemanagement.net.