

A number of dealers have their own websites. Many more are listing used equipment on a company-sponsored site called MachineFinder-dot-com, launched late last year. Roughly 6,000 pieces of equipment, mostly tractors and combines, are presently available over MachineFinder . . . and about 15,000 users have registered for the site.

Whatever the future of MachineFinder and other emerging Internet-related services, one can safely assume that technology will play as big a role in the success of tomorrow's farmers as the weather or government policies.

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As technology makes farmers more productive, it's also helping them be good stewards of the soil, the air and the water. That's the third area I'd like to touch on today.

Outside of large hog lots—which is certainly a newsworthy issue in Iowa—the environmental side of farming doesn't grab many headlines. But it's quite a factor in the farming process . . . and seems likely to stay that way.

Regulation, for one thing, will see to it that farmers remain serious about limiting emissions . . . preserving the soil . . . and controlling the run-off of chemicals and waste. Some of the proposals you hear about would even limit the hours farmers spend in their fields, based on dust restrictions. Noise abatement is an emerging concern. And water quality seems likely to be the next big area of regulatory focus.

All this, of course, adds cost and complexity to the farming process. But many of the very things that make farmers environmentally sensitive . . . are actually fiscally sensible. That is, they help farmers become more productive and profitable.

New engines are cleaner-burning and more efficient. Precision farming helps farmers cut down on input costs. New sprayers apply herbicides with laser-like precision, cutting down on waste and over-spray.

All that's good for the environment, of course. But it's also beneficial for the farmer's bottom line.

Iowa's farmers are truly among the unsung heroes in today's environmental movement. For without modern fertilizers, herbicides and machinery . . . without high-yield production practices . . . and without the tremendous yield gains we've seen over the years . . . an additional one-million square miles of our nation (all the land east of the Mississippi River, in size) would need to be plowed under and made into cropland, merely to equal present levels of grain production.

That's no less than three miles the amount of land currently devoted to farming. It's fair to say, moreover, that these new fields would come at the direct expense of forested areas and other land now serving as wildlife habitat or as part of our natural watershed.

Clearly, farmers have done quite a job of safeguarding our natural resources, while meeting the world's growing need for food. Nevertheless, tomorrow's increasingly formidable environmental pressures will require an even more intensive commitment on their part.

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Regardless of the challenges ahead for agriculture, I assure you that Deere remains firmly committed to providing solutions to our customers' needs and customers in our case go far beyond the farm.

Over the last several years, John Deere has worked hard to achieve a good deal of diversification in our operations. We've done so not by plunging into altogether-new businesses, but by applying the lessons learned from generations of dealing with farmers to a broader range of customers.

Our view is that the characteristics of our Waterloo-made tractors, or Des Moines cotton pickers—such as durability and reliability—work just as well for construction equipment, such as Dubuque-made backhoes.

The same goes for our new skid-steer loaders, Gator utility vehicles, golf and turf equipment or the full range of lawn-care machinery now being offered in green and yellow.

Similarly, our Des Moines-based credit operation owes its success not to the fact that the money it lends goes farther than anyone else's . . . but because of the integrity and service that has long been associated with the John Deere name. (John Deere Credit, incidentally, is quite a successful enterprise in its own right, normally adding 20% or so to the company's overall net income.)

Moreover, it is these non-ag operations that have been the focus of major investment programs of late . . . and which we're counting on to help us achieve more consistency in our profits whenever the farm economy weakens.

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None of which, in any way, dampens our enthusiasm for farming.

Because despite some of the challenges I've mentioned—and the current downturn is very real and painful—the future for agriculture looks good.

Darned good, in fact.

Regardless of Indonesia's financial problems . . . the world still has 10,000 new mouths to feed every hour, and, again, will need three times today's grain output within 50 years.

No matter what's ahead for Brazil's real or Russia's ruble . . . a good deal of money will be spent on the increased consumption of meat—which is a primary driver of demand for grain.

Beyond the Third World's growing pains . . . the global farm population, now over 40%, will shrink as industrial growth creates new opportunities and higher living standards. This will make Iowa's contribution to the world food supply all the more important.

True, these things may take shape more slowly than we expected, but the fundamental trends are headed in the right direction.

All point . . . to a promising future . . . for a globally attuned . . . technologically astute . . . environmentally aware . . . agricultural sector—such as exists in Iowa and surrounding states.●

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate immediately proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations on the Executive Calendar: No. 231 and 233; and the nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy. I further ask unanimous consent that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then return to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nominations were considered and confirmed as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The following named United States Army officer for reappointment as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and appointment to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 152:

To be general

Gen. Henry H. Shelton, 0000.

NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral

Rear Adm. (lh) Joseph W. Dyer, Jr., 0000.

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE, ARMY, MARINE CORPS, NAVY

Air Force nominations beginning Michael L Colopy, and ending Eveline F Yaotiu, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of August 3, 1999.

Air Force nomination of Thomas G. Bowie, Jr., which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

Air Force nominations beginning James W Bost, and ending Grover K Yamane, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

Marine Corps nomination of Michael J. Dellamico, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

Marine Corps nomination of Charles S. Dunston, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

Navy nominations beginning Thomas K Aanstoots, and ending Robert D Younger, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of July 26, 1999.

Navy nominations beginning David M Brown, and ending Paul W Witt, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of August 4, 1999.

Navy nominations beginning Anibal L Acevedo, and ending Steven T Zimmerman, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

Navy nominations beginning Daniel A Abrams, and ending John M Zuzich, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

Navy nominations beginning Marc E Arena, and ending Antonio J Scurlock, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 13, 1999.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will return to legislative session.

EXTENSION OF AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1637 introduced earlier today by Senator LOTT.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows: