

Big Iron takes on international flair

by Patricia Stockdill

Big Iron 2007 takes on an even greater international flavor with its inaugural International Visitors Program.

A joint effort of the N.D. Trade Office, Red River Valley Fair Association and U.S. Commercial Service, the program is an opportunity for international buyers to attend Big Iron for an up-close look at the newest agricultural equipment and latest advances in agricultural technology. In addition, they can see specialized agricultural equipment produced in North Dakota and meet with individual manufacturers.

"The bottom line is to put the buyers and sellers together," N.D. Trade Office Communications Director Jeff Zent said. More than 40 international buyers are expected to attend.

The N.D. Trade Office and international trade specialists at the U.S. Commercial Service screened, identified and recruited the foreign buyers attending Big Iron and the International Visitors Program. U.S. Commercial Service is an expert in the field of international markets, Zent said.

Buyers from Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and several other countries pay their own way to attend Big Iron and the International Visitors Program. All are from regions of the world with high demands for agricultural equipment.

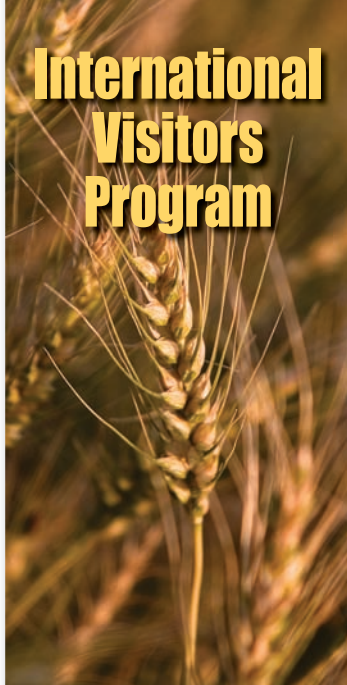
The Trade Office is pleased with the amount of interest expressed by the international buyers, Zent said. Buyer interest exceeded the initial goal. Additional international buyers are expected to register prior to the opening of Big Iron.

While at Big Iron, they can watch several in-the-field demonstrations, have one-on-one meetings with manufacturers, attend a reception with dealers and manufacturers, and tour Fargo's Case New Holland tractor plant and an RDO John Deere dealership.

International Visitors Program participants will also have access to the International Pavilion with Internet services and meeting spaces.

The N.D. Trade Office has coordinated six trade missions representing 42 companies and three universities. Through its trade missions, North Dakota companies visit foreign countries with potential for new or expanded international markets.

Through the International Visitors Program, buyers from foreign



International Visitors Program

More information about the N.D. Trade Office is available at www.ndto.com or by calling (701) 235-3638.

countries have access to larger numbers of North Dakota equipment companies and can learn more about their high-quality products.

"It should be a real win-win opportunity for everyone," said Exhibit Coordinator Chaun Merkens, with the Red River Valley Fair Association. The International Visitors Program will improve and expand Big Iron's existing international presence, she said. In addition, it could increase North Dakota and Big Iron's worldwide presence in the agricultural equipment market.

The idea of bringing a larger group of agricultural buyers together with larger numbers and types of manufacturers began when manufacturers and Trade Office officials were on a trade mission

to the Ukraine, Zent said. As North Dakota manufacturers toured the former Soviet Union Block member, participants began looking at new ideas and additional ways to bring manufacturers and buyers together.

Big Iron was the natural fit. Now in its 27th year, Big Iron will have

more than 800 exhibitors at the 2007 show. The show will introduce International Visitors Program participants to some of the leading United States agricultural equipment manufacturers, Merkens said, while providing opportunities to see and meet North Dakota-based companies that can fill unique or niche market demands.

The N.D. Trade Office already has contacts in seven countries that are in high demand for agricultural equipment. Bringing buyers to Big Iron through the International Visitors Program offers a setting much like a one-stop shopping, person-to-person trade show, Zent said. From the manufacturer's perspective, the International Visitors Program allows opportunities for field demonstrations that otherwise would be more difficult to do in a trade mis-



The inaugural International Visitors Program will bring more than 40 international buyers to the Big Iron Farm Show this year, says N.D. Trade Office Communications Director Jeff Zent. The program is a joint effort of the N.D. Trade Office, Red River Valley Fair Association and U.S. Commercial Service.

sion setting.

Plans call for using the inaugural International Visitors Program as a building cornerstone and have it become an annual part of Big Iron. While Big Iron runs Sept. 11-13, the International Visitors Program kicks off Sept. 10. ■

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