DIVERSE VENDORS, VISITORS GATHER AT CENTRAL MINNESOTA FARM SHOW

When you live and work forty miles from the nearest major town, a shopping trip is frequently a whole day affair. Super-stores and shopping malls make it possible to find groceries, clothes, and general necessities all under one roof, but farm equipment is another matter. Most of it is too big or too expensive to have on display. Farmers browse the latest equipment by thumbing through catalogues or searching the Internet. But before spending thousands of dollars on a new piece of equipment, it makes sense that most customers want a first-hand look at a product. That's precisely what attracts over 4000 visitors to the Central Minnesota Farm Show each year.

Successful businesses know the value of having merchandise on hand. Although rising numbers of farm consolidations mean fewer actual vendors, it also means current vendors have been able to purchase extra space to display more products than ever before. Some vendors have actually doubled the amount of space they usually reserve. This year visitors can look forward to multiple displays from vendors such as Arnzen Construction, Arnold's, and Midwest Machinery.

The increased publicity surrounding genetically engineered seeds has stirred up a lot of interest from farmers. Visitors will find dozens of seed companies on hand to answer the growing number of questions about safety, quality, and storage issues.

The show is also an educational opportunity for people in the agriculture business. Just because the number of farms has declined, doesn't mean production has suffered, explains Ginny Kroll, special events coordinator at the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber organizes the annual Farm Show. "We're seeing just as much livestock, if not more." These days efficiency is the key to making a profit, and vendors seize the opportunity to illustrate the cost-effective capabilities of their products. Visitors can expect interactive presentations from companies such as Ameribuilt Buildings, Morton Buildings, Dairyland Supply and H&S out of Wisconsin, Carlson Wholesale, Inc., Genex-CRI Systems, Meyer Manufacturing.

Visitors will also find representatives from area financial services, including Wells Fargo and AgStar. Various agriculture organizations will be on hand to distribute information.

This year the Farm Show also welcomes a number of new additions to the mix. "We'll have exhibitors displaying trailers, corn stoves, and wind turbines" according to Kroll.

Diversity is the key to attracting large numbers. "From the hobby farm to the industrial farm, we have something for everyone," says Kroll. "All the vendors have show specials, and we have door prize drawings as well."