

Mobile unit tells biotech's story

By WILLIE VOGT

BIOTECH crops have been commercial since 1996, yet there's a lot going on in this field of agricultural science; and farmers need more information everyday. Each of the major biotech research companies is doing its part to tell the story. For Monsanto, a big part of that effort involves having farmers tour the company's research facilities in Chesterfield, Mo. While those tours may continue, the company is working to reach more farmers.

Starting in late July, the new Mobile Technology Unit hit the road. In the course of the next 12 months, it will visit 40 different locations. More than a glorified semi-truck with a little classroom space, the MTU offers a coordinated information program from start to finish that involves video, live demonstration and informative question and answer sessions.

"We wanted to bring the experience of visiting our research facilities to more farmers," says Jim Zimmer, vice president, U.S. branded business, Monsanto. Zimmer notes the company is spending \$2 million a day on research, which is aimed at helping farmers increase productivity and profitability. "We wanted

Key Points

- Mobile rig allows Monsanto to share its biotech story with visitors.
- The unit is not designed for 'mass tours,' but instead for small groups.
- Farmers get in-depth information from ag educators.

farmers to see what we're doing."

The resulting "facility" travels on 18 wheels and has a following truck as well that brings along added displays. The custom-built rig features a 14-seat theater using high-definition broadcast. The rig is even outfitted with a satellite dish so two-way video conferences, or special events, can be conducted in the theater, too.

From that theater, farmers then go through a special tour.

A concentrated tour

First stop is a look at the international effort to find new germplasm. From there, visitors see a robotic system that is used to test germplasm and traits in the lab. Beyond that is a display for the magnetic resonance imaging system Monsanto uses to test seed oil content without destroying the seed sample.



SET UP AND READY: This special 18-wheel rig built by Monsanto takes five to eight hours to set up, but can include an area for meals (under awning on this side) before visitors enter the tour.



PLENTY TO SEE:

The inside-tour of the truck includes several stations that farmers will visit to see everything from where unique germplasm can be found to Monsanto's product development pipeline.

All that happens within about 15 feet of entering the display area, and the entire tour can take as little as 45 minutes. All along the way, ag education specialists tell the story of germplasm and biotech research, talk about the pipeline and show new technology that's on the way from the company. This is no "mass attendance" facility designed to push hundreds of farmers through in a single day. Instead, the facility is built around the idea of a more concentrated tour for small groups. In its first year, about 8,000 farmers will go through.

Beyond the truck

Once the main tour is over, visiting farmers step outside where kiosks with special displays about ethanol and other products — such as Vistive soybeans or E85 biofuels — await. The flexibility of the setup allows the company the ability to create a "special day" event

with a meal, and even local exhibitors that might be part of the post-tour display. "There's a lot of flexibility with the MTU," says Linda Arnold, customer outreach lead. Arnold, who headed up the development effort for the MTU, adds that the cost of the rig is economical. "When compared to the cost of bringing farmers to our Chesterfield facility, this is more economical."

The rig uses a theme farmers may be hearing more of in the coming months: Our science. Your success. It's a message the company is supporting as it shows new products in its pipeline, including drought-tolerant corn, corn with better nitrogen utilization, enhanced Vistive soybean traits and even new pest-management tools for cotton (Lygus control). Farmers will have plenty to see when the MTU rolls into their area. Look for the Monsanto MTU coming to a town near you in the next year to 18 months.

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Compact Bobcat boosts a big cab

BOB-CAT'S new S100 is a sturdy compact replacement for the company's 533 model skid-steer loader, featuring a 1,000-pound operating capacity and a 33.5-horsepower transversely mounted diesel engine.

The S100 also boasts a new spacious cab, an easy-to-read instrument cluster and a 50-inch width for maneuvering in tight spaces.

Lift height on the S100 is 8.5 feet, powered with 13.1 gallons per minute worth of hydraulic capacity. The machine weighs only 4,110 pounds.

The instrument panel on the S100 includes an onboard diagnostic center that keeps track of the machine's engine, electrical and hydraulic systems. The system includes a shutdown feature that prevents catastrophic damage when any of the systems fall out of range.

The four-cylinder diesel engine is mounted for easy maintenance and use of the same belt drive system found on other Bobcat models for drive



BOBCAT S100: Bobcat is replacing its 533 skid-steer loader with the new S100 model, which is rated at 1,000-pounds capacity and measures only 50 inches wide for tight maneuvering. The S100 is powered with a four-cylinder, 33.5-hp diesel engine.

and hydraulic pumps.

The S100 moves at 6.5 mph and comes with the standard Bob-Tach system for easy, no-tool attachment swapping.

For more information on the S100, visit www.bobcat.com.