

Argentinean shows took inspiration from Farm Progress

Commentary

By FRANCISCO BIENER

I'VE been organizing trips to the famous Farm Progress Show for 20 years. In the beginning, we were "familiar" groups, around 15 to 20 people. This year we are bringing a record 220 visitors, and fully expect the number to grow in future years.

I live in Rosario, Argentina, Santa Fe's province. Rosario is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world, where soybeans, corn, sunflowers and wheat are harvested twice a year.

The city is located 187 miles north of Buenos Aires, next to the Parana River. Several cereal docks are located here, as well as Soya Oil Industries, Argentina's first Soya Oil exporter in the world.

Before organizing trips, I was involved in ag machinery sales for several years, mainly in regional export and pro-

motions for Argentine products in South America. All these experiences helped me meet agricultural business-related people, which made it easier for me to promote my tours to the U.S.



Show is a big deal

Visiting the Farm Progress Show 25 years ago was for a person in the agricultural business as exciting as for a Catholic to visit the Vatican. Even nowadays that our local agricultural shows are comparable to the Farm Progress Show, it is still a great deal for a farmer to visit the Farm Progress Show.

Local shows in our country were only static ones and indoors. It was less than 20 years ago that the Farm Progress Show inspired the early visitors to push local organizers to have a field in order to be able to demonstrate machinery. Of course, this system (copied from the Farm Progress Show) worked with great success.

There are two mega farm shows (dy-



READY FOR TAKEOFF: Argentinean Francisco Alberto Biener has been organizing trips to the Farm Progress Show for 20 years.

amic and static) and several smaller ones in different times of the year and places in the South American countries. Our neighbor, Brazil also has a very important farm show, with dynamic field demonstrations, all inspired by the Farm Progress Show.

Most local agricultural machinery and parts manufacturers are owned by ex-farm families who began farming around 50 years ago to cover the special agricultural requirements due to the vast land's diversity in the country. Most of these manufacturers made massive improvements by just visiting the Farm Progress Show and adapting their products to the international market.

In 1999 I had to organize, besides my yearly groups, the visit of nine local companies that were showing their products at the Farm Progress Show. This, of course, was a great moment of my career — awakening curiosity and praise from many people that were a bit scared of showing their products in a foreign country.

Unfortunately, this was followed by a sad event a few years later, when on Sept. 10, 2001, I had everything confirmed and prepaid to take a group of 65 to visit the Farm Progress Show when the following day ... well, it is better not to mention it. Nevertheless, I ended up bringing a group of 25 farmers, calling attention to the show by being one of the few international visitors at the 2001 event. That year (because it was planned and booked before the sad event) we started our trip in New York City on Sept. 18, only a week after the attack, the city was still covered by a dense dust cloud from the World Trade Center.

Side trips

Regarding the trips I organize yearly to visit the Farm Progress Show whose slogan I use — "To see as much as possible, in an efficient time with the best comfort" — we also include visits to John Deere's branches in Iowa and Illinois, as well as the headquarters in Moline, Ill.

We also visit the Chicago Board

of Trade and hold a conference with local annualists. We even include an Argentinean style "asado" (barbecue) at a local farm. We invite local farmers to participate in order to exchange experiences and knowledge. This meeting is kept motivated by hiring a local band that plays live country music and by drinking a delicious Malbec (Argentine red wine) that we buy from a local distributor.

I am a true admirer of the USA, especially of its agricultural sector. Most of the time, the people that never visit the U.S. have a wrong concept of this great



FLAG OF FRIENDS: Visitors from all over the world annually visit the Farm Progress Show. However, the Argentineans have been coming regularly for decades.

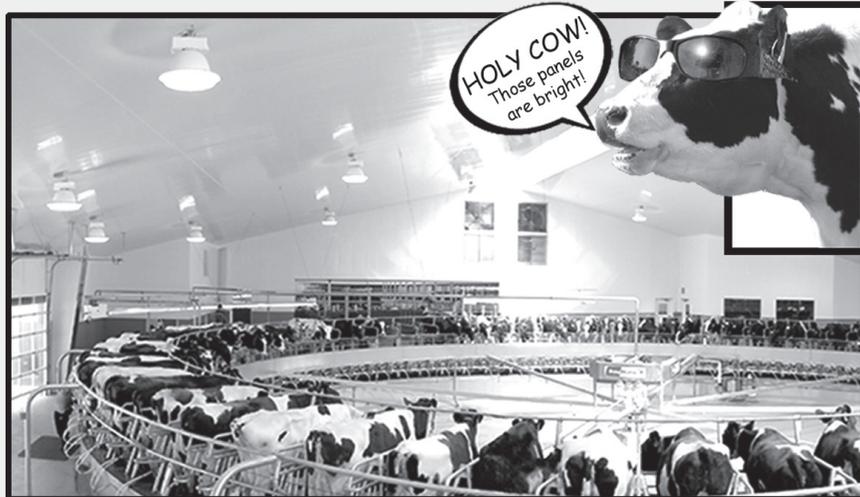
country, and for me, it is a pleasure to open their minds by showing all the goods sides of this land ... to show them the real country.

I also have a deep appreciation to Farm Progress Companies, who besides being very professional is made up of great people. They always offered me lots of support for my groups.

Francisco Alberto Biener, also known as Pancho, is an Argentinean with many years of experience in the ag industry. He uses his expertise to lead groups from Argentina to the Farm Progress Show.

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