

## Mini Combine Turns Heads At Shows

When Rob Rose, a road mechanic for Agraturf Equipment Services in Simcoe, Ontario, decided to turn a lawn tractor into a combine, he didn't use a real combine as a model.

"I purchased one of the little toy models of the Deere 9860 STS combine they sell for kids. I set it on the work bench at home and kept going back and forth to it," he says.

Rose used the toy to help turn a LT 150 Deere lawn tractor into a 5-ft. tall, 6-ft. wide replica of the combine. It turned a lot of heads at his company's exhibit at the recent Canada's Outdoor Farm Show.

Although the tractor-combine drives around just fine, the additional harvesting parts don't actually function.

To make the machine work, he reversed the axles and raised it up to get more ground clearance. Duals on front give the machine

more traction. He also lengthened the frame and rails using shop scraps.

Rose fabricated all the additional parts from scratch to make it look like a combine. That, he says, was the biggest challenge.

"Duplicating the side panels on it was the hardest because there's a lot of curves in it," he says. "I put about 100 hours into each panel." The entire project took about 1,500 hours.

Since completing the project in July, he's heard a lot of comments about the machine. "It went off better than I anticipated."

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Rob Rose turned an LT 150 Deere lawn tractor into this 5-ft. tall, 6-ft. wide replica of a Deere 9860 STS combine.

## Seed Box Scales Replace Expensive Monitors

A simple load bar weighing system for drill seed boxes can quickly pay for itself, says Brian Taylor, a dealer for NORAC on-board weighing systems. Taylor says it's a low cost alternative to electronic grain drill monitors.

"People told me they weren't happy with available monitors which cost quite a bit more than our scales, and are more complicated," says Taylor, who sells a seed box weigh kit for around \$2,300.

Seeing a new market, Taylor designed an installation kit for Deere, Sunflower and Case-IH no-till seed drills. To install the load bars, the seed box is detached from the frame and lifted out of the way. Brackets for the load bars are then bolted into existing holes on the frame. The seed box is then lowered into place and attached to the load bars. Installation usually takes about two hours.

In addition to the kit, tractors should be outfitted with an accurate digital acreage counter. By comparing the rate of decrease in seed weight to acres drilled, operators can verify that their drill setting is accurate.

"I had a Sunflower drill owner tell me he saved \$1,000 on 200 acres of soybeans by putting the right amount of seed on," says Taylor.

Setting up the load sensing system is easy, he says. Once a kit is installed, the operator plants an acre and checks the weight decrease.

"If adjustments to the drill are needed, a second comparison is made at 1 1/2 acres," says Taylor. "If the amount used is correct, it's good to go."

No further calibration is needed. The system comes with a one-year warranty and is built to remain accurate under the roughest



Load bars under seed box are visible from end of drill.

conditions. Taylor says the systems can even withstand hitting a pothole while being towed at 30 miles an hour.

Taylor admits that low commodity prices make it difficult for some farmers to justify any investment in equipment. At the same time, he suggests, the time may never be bet-

ter. "Why waste fuel and expensive seed putting on the wrong amount," he says.

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By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

## Low-Cost "Tractors In Crates" Selling Like Hotcakes

Assembling your own tractor is a great way to get a machine for half price or less. But it's not for everyone, says John Nelson, Nelson Equipment Corp. He sells tractors and other equipment in crates. Customers include both dealers and individuals looking for a low cost alternative to brand name equipment.

"If you've never changed oil on a car, go buy a Kubota," says Nelson. "If you're independent minded, it might be right for you."

To help prospective customers decide if a crate tractor is for them, Nelson offers a free one-hour assembly video. "If you are a decent mechanic, it's not hard," he says. "My wife is tool impaired, and I am old with heart problems, but you can put a tractor and loader together in a weekend. All the tools you need come with the tractor, along with spare parts, filters and other stuff."

Nelson has been selling Chinese-built Jinma tractors in crates via the internet since 2000. He sells about 100 tractors a year and has shipped to almost every state in the U.S.

Jinmas are the most widely imported tractors from China and have been manufactured in that country since 1959. Nelson offers 25 to 35 hp tractors with live hydraulics, live PTO, glow plugs and power steering. Prices range from \$5,900 to \$13,500 for tractor, loader and backhoe attachment.

"They're sold under many different brand names in North America and through hundreds of small dealers," says Nelson. "Even parts are no longer a concern, with companies like Northern Hydraulics and other big outfits handling them. Parts are also available from jmparts.com via the internet."

Nelson says he hasn't seen any major prob-

lems with the tractors he sells. In most cases, the owner can take care of it, sometimes with a little phone support. If parts are missing from a delivered crate tractor, Nelson usually asks the new owner to pick up small nuts, bolts and zerk fittings locally. If it is a functional part, he promises to "move heaven and earth" to get the part to the customer.

"I had one customer who decided after buying a tractor that the project wasn't for him, so we sold it for him," says Nelson. Usually customers tell us that the tractors are a lot better than expected, good and solid."

This year is the first that EPA-approved engines have been offered. The tractors represent basic 1960's technology but they're now manufactured in modern production facilities using the latest technology.

"They're a tool, not a toy," says Nelson. "What most people like is that they get to know the tractor from the start and fix things the way they want as they put it together. When they get on it and start it up, there is a sense of accomplishment."

Nelson also offers a small dozer in a crate. It has a 3-pt. hitch like a tractor and is small enough it can be towed on a trailer behind a pickup truck. No commercial license is needed. The dozer comes mostly assembled with finish work consisting largely of attaching the front blade and a blade carrier. The dozers are priced at \$11,999 to \$13,495 and are available both new and used.

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John Nelson sells Chinese-built tractors in crates. Jinma tractors are also sold in the U.S. under the brand names Farm Pro, NorTrac, Agracat, and others.



Assembling your own tractor is a great way to get a machine for half price or less, says Nelson.