

Agriculture important for economic growth

VICTOR MOOLMAN | CREAMER MEDIA REPORTER

The continued growth of agricultural exhibition Nampo Harvest Day, in the Free State, reflects the importance of agriculture to the economic growth of South Africa, says equipment supplier Smith Power Equipment (SPE) Polaris and Linhai product range national sales manager **Mark Chittenden**.

Having attended the show for the past 16 years, he notes that every year SPE showcases new products in order to reach a broader customer base. "This year, we will be relaunching the Linhai range, as some of the products have been revised. We will also have new models on our Polaris stand, as well as a new tractor from equipment manufacturer Kubota and the 8 t KX080-3 Kubota excavator."

SPE marketing manager **Robert Keir** explains that the Nampo Harvest Day show brings the agricultural industry – which includes importers, dealers and customers – to one place. The show offers an array of products and insights for farmers to make the best informed investments for their operations.

"We've identified agriculture as a key market for SPE, since every farmer needs the right tools to do their work effectively and,



Pictures by Senior Chief Photographer Duane Dawes

MARK CHITTENDEN

This year's industry outlook is showing more growth than last year

from a financial perspective, mechanisation is vital in running a farm more efficiently," he says.

Keir points out that Nampo Harvest Day is the ideal event at which to launch new products onto the agricultural sector market. New products from SPE, like the Kubota compact excavator KX080-3S, which was launched this year, boost mechanisation of agriculture in South Africa and fuel competition in the market.

Chittenden explains that the relaunching of Linhai all-terrain vehicles, such as the 300 and 400 4 × 4 models, will fill the stand, while the diesel-powered Linhai 800 side-by-side with bench seat and steel bin will be demonstrated at the new agricultural track.

At the Polaris stand, there will be two new vehicles launched as well, the Polaris Ranger 570 and the Polaris Ranger 570 Crew.

Industry Challenges

Chittenden points out that the most successful year that SPE has had was in 2015, before the market slowed down as a result of the drought that hit South Africa last year.

"The drought last year made trading conditions very challenging and, as an industry, we have lost momentum," he says.

However, Keir explains that SPE is positive about the outcomes this year, as the company has already observed some positive trends in the market: the rand is strengthening slightly and customers of the company are spending more strategically than before.

"Even though we see disparate weather patterns and rainfall in different provinces, with the Western Cape still navigating a bad drought, it is encouraging that we have had good rains in the northern regions," he notes.

Creative financial offerings such as 'off-balance-sheet funding' are important in this climate. With SPE having been accredited at all banking institutions in South Africa, the company can make deals that are aimed at assisting its clients. He points out that such an approach to asset finance comes with benefits to the farmer, such as not having to lay out any initial capital, which helps with essential cash flow.

"Further, lease payments on the equipment are fully tax deductible and VAT refunds are paid on a monthly basis. Tailor-made finance like this can mean the difference between the disappearance and survival of the farmer," Keir explains.

Some of the topics being discussed at the show, such as greater agricultural mechanisation, the impact of emissions on the environment, product-buyer connections and financial solutions in the sector are of interest to SPE, he says. The company specialists will participate in key discussions on these matters.

Chittenden concludes that, because the Nampo Harvest Day show is an agricultural show, SPE will be focusing on the Kubota tractors, with the other company brands being there to support a full product line-up.

"This year has started off looking promising and we believe it will be better than last year." ■

ENGINEERING NEWS COUPON ON PAGE 82 E450671

GO FIGURE

16

The period in years for which Smith Power Equipment has been attending the Nampo Harvest Day show



KUBOTA

Kubota machines will be exhibited at the Smith Power Equipment stand

The reason people find it hard to be happy is that they always see the past better than it was, the present worse than it is, and the future less resolved than it will be.