

Arizona equipment dealer buys Christiansen Implement

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Stotz Equipment of Avondale, Ariz., has purchased Christiansen Implement, a long-time southern Idaho equipment company with a strong business in new and used ag equipment.

Stotz made the announcement publicly on June 22, after having informed employees of both companies at the first of the month.

Stotz CEO and President Tom Rosztoczy said the trans-

action is scheduled to close on Aug. 1.

Stotz, a full-service John Deere dealership, was founded in 1947 by Rosztoczy's grandfather and remains a family business.

Christiansen is also a family-owned John Deere dealership, making it a natural fit in Stotz's growing business, he said.

Christiansen's three stores, in American Falls, Burley and Twin Falls, are also a good fit as the northern neighbors of Stotz's operations in Tremon-

ton, Utah, and Preston, Idaho, he said.

Growing by acquiring a neighbor in your trade area is attractive, and the Snake River Plain has significant potential, he said.

"It has a much better overall farming area than we have in any of our other stores," he said.

Stotz's acquisition of Christiansen will bring its numbers to 25 stores across eight Western states, he said.

While Rosztoczy declined to provide details of the pur-

chase or company sales, he said Stotz employs 450 people and Christiansen employs 75.

Both companies have an institutional knowledge and experience that will benefit the operation, he said.

"I think there will be good synergies that will go both ways," he said.

For example, Christiansen's American Falls store has a lot of combine sales and does a great job of combine service and support, whereas combines are a small part of

the business at Stotz's Preston store.

On the flip side, Stotz's Tremonton store is strong in forage harvesters, whereas the Burley and Twin Falls stores aren't, he said.

Christiansen's owners have chosen not to stay on with Stotz in a leadership position, but employee layoffs are not in the plan and it should be a seamless transition, he said.

He added that he hopes Christiansen's employees will see the benefits of being asso-

ciated with a family business that values community and a work-life balance and treats people like people, as well as providing additional training, experience and career opportunities that a larger organization can offer.

An open house at each location and various other events during harvest and the holiday season will be held at each new location in the near future to help introduce Stotz to the communities and to learn more about the territory and customers.

Southern Idaho agribusiness success has deep roots

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
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Southern Idaho's agribusiness community has been blessed with some big splashes in the last few years, with national brands such as Chobani and Cliff Bar choosing to call the Magic Valley home and long-time residents such as Glanbia and McCain investing in sizable expansions.

But feed and food production has always been a mainstay in the region, dating back to the Carey Act — which brought irrigation and attracted farmers to transform the high desert into rich agricultural land, said Travis Rothweiler, Twin Falls city manager.

"Today, that ag land reigns supreme, and value-added agriculture is still the cornerstone of our economy. Agriculture is always going to be that cornerstone," he said.

Idaho's ag production ranks in the top three nationwide in several commodities, and Southern Idaho ranks in the top five



Jeff Hough, right, executive director of Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization, talks with Twin Falls City Manager Travis Rothweiler at Twin Falls City Hall on June 17.

in the state of more than a dozen, he said.

"It really is America's most diverse food basket. When you step back and look at everything being

produced, Southern Idaho really is feeding the

world," he said.

The region's agribusiness footprint has been building over time and has really blossomed within the last three years, said Jeff Hough, executive director of the Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization.

The region sold more than \$7 billion in ag-related goods and services in 2015 and contributes significantly to Idaho ranking in the top third of U.S. states for food processing.

In 2015, Southern Idaho's agribusiness prowess won a federal designation as a food manufacturing hub from the U.S. Department of Commerce, putting it in the global and national spotlight, he said.

New companies are drawn to the area, expanding opportunity, but there is a long list of agribusinesses that have been in the region for decades, Rothweiler said.

"Every single one is critical to the economy of southern Idaho," he said.

One of the things that is really blooming is food science and research and development. Southern Idaho is home to seven world-class food science facilities, he said.

The region is building a food research and development and science cluster. It's really starting to expand to complete the entire chain from field to table, he said.

With growth comes jobs, infrastructure development and additional economic activity, Hough said.

More than one-third of the region's jobs are directly or indirectly created by agriculture, with 15,000 jobs directly related to farming or processing.

Food manufacturers represent 67 percent of the region's employers, he said.

In addition to a plentiful supply of raw products, a high quality workforce, customized worker training programs at the College of Southern Idaho and competitive tax and utilities structures all play a part in the growth, Rothweiler said.

"It's a pro-business climate state ... everybody tries to make those good fits feel welcome," Hough said.

It's really a team approach, with the state, cities and economic development organizations all working together to lend whatever assistance they can to companies and to each other, Rothweiler said.

"Economic development is a team sport. Success, collectively, is greater than the success we can create individually," he said.

Growth in any area of the Magic Valley is going to support all of the Magic Valley, he said.

"We're going to continue to explore opportunities to thoughtfully grow the economy and the community," he said.

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