

Fix or replace? It's often a taxing question

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Whether to fix or replace old farm equipment usually boils down to one thing, according to Will Schwartz, owner of the Tractor Store in Eugene, Ore.

"The biggest factor I find is whether they need a tax write-off or not and how much of a write-off they need," Schwartz said. "If they're having a bad year they just wind up fixing the old stuff rather than buying new."

The Tractor Store sells all kinds of farm equipment except balers and combines, he said.

"Sales have been about the same for the last four or five years, at least for me," Schwartz said. "There are a lot of small farmers that just can't justify \$30,000 for a new tractor and they don't need a huge write-off."

"When it comes to the used equipment, most of our customers are willing to spend \$6,000 for an engine overhaul on a tractor that may be worth only \$6,000," he said. "To go buy another used one it's going to cost \$6,000. At least this way when they fix their own they know that the motor's going to be good for the next 15 or 20 years."

Others simply love older and antique farm equipment, whether for sentimental reasons or simplicity and relative ease of repair, he said.

The store generally serves customers from Albany to Coos Bay, Ore., where there are a lot of small farms, with an increasing number going into organic farming.

Hobby farms also continue to gain in popularity.

"We have a lot of hobby farmers," he said. "They have a full-time job and they make good money and it's more that they want to live in the country, and if you live in the country you



Photos courtesy of Cameron Schwartz

Will Schwartz, owner of The Tractor Store in Eugene, Ore., with a Branson 2400. He says many small-scale farmers don't want a lot of onboard electronics.



Jim Hall looks over a Ford 3000 at The Tractor Store in Eugene, Ore. Store owner Will Schwartz says whether to fix or replace an old tractor usually boils down to the farm's tax situation and bottom line.

have to have a tractor. Those people will buy a brand-new tractor because they're using the farm for a write-off anyway."

To prevent unexpected breakdowns and subsequent delays during the busy season, it's good to get machinery in order before putting it away for the winter, when waits are shorter and downtime isn't an issue.

New small tractors cost anywhere from \$15,000 to \$50,000. Most of the farm-

ers Schwartz sees tend to steer clear of onboard electronics, so he stocks his inventory along those lines.

With some of the other tractors that have the computerized engines, farmers are stuck with taking it back to the dealer to have it worked on, he said. "Unless you have the computer program there's no way of doing too much to the engine on it. You plug the computer in and it tells you what's going on."

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Will Schwartz, owner of the Tractor Store



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