



Deere &amp; Company

Farm machinery sales ended in positive territory in 2020 despite the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

## Farm machinery sales overcome pandemic shock, unpredictability

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Farm machinery sales overcame a demand shock from the coronavirus outbreak to finish 2020 with adequate though unremarkable growth in large tractors and combines.

Meanwhile, the pandemic strongly stimulated consumer appetites for smaller tractors along with building and garden supplies as people spent more time at home.

"There are reasons for optimism. We're ending on a solid note for 2020," said Curt Blades, senior vice president of ag services for the Association of Equipment Manufacturers.

Sales increased 3.7% last year for new four-wheel-drive tractors, to nearly 3,000 units, and 3.2% for new two-wheel drive tractors over 100 horsepower, to more than 19,000 units, according to AEM. Sales of new combines grew 5.5%, to more than 5,000 units.

Those results aren't stellar, since the relatively low

number of units can easily shift the percentages from year-to-year, said Blades. "That could have been a timing issue."

Even if sales of new machinery were basically flat, the market proved sturdier in 2020 than initially feared in the early days of the coronavirus outbreak.

Farm machinery demand "fell off a cliff" after lockdowns were imposed last March, with tractor sales plunging 15-18% across size categories and combine sales dropping 12%, according to AEM.

Partly due to federal coronavirus relief and other farm assistance — which totaled \$46.5 billion last year — machinery sales began to turn the corner by mid-year and then moved into positive territory as 2020 drew to a close.

"The government payments came in stronger than expected," Blades said.

Aside from government help, farmers saw their cash flows improve from the rise in commodity crop prices that began in autumn, said

Michael Langemeier, an agricultural economics professor at Purdue University who tracks machinery sales.

Since last summer, the price of corn has grown from about \$3.25 per bushel to more than \$5 per bushel while soybean prices have increased from below \$10 per bushel to as high as \$14 in some areas, he said.

Prices for commodity crops have strengthened due to lower-than-expected ending stocks as well as higher-than-expected Chinese demand, Langemeier said. "Exports are much stronger than we thought they were going to be."

As a result, farmers sought to reduce their taxable income by investing in new machinery in 2020, particularly since many had deferred replacing older tractors and combines during several years of low incomes, he said. "You're looking at a situation where a lot of farms had a lot more cash flow than they thought they were going to have."

Judging from the futures market and projected cash

prices, the outlook for tractor and combine sales looks optimistic in 2021, Langemeier said. "If that materializes, you will see some pretty strong demand for machinery."

Though sales of small tractors were slow out of the gate, their popularity flourished as the months of quarantine wore on: Sales surged 21% for tractors under 40 horsepower and 14% for those between 40 and 100 horsepower, according to AEM.

Those statistics are in line with growth in the retail market for building materials and gardening equipment, which saw sales increase more than 13% last year, to \$400 billion, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Demand for utility tractors soared among "rural lifestyle" landowners with small acreages, as well as among cattle producers who saw them as affordable and useful investments, Blades said.

"The small tractor market has been on fire throughout the year," he said.

## Farm groups ask Inslee to revise COVID housing rules

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Two Washington farms groups are pushing the Inslee administration to write new farmworker housing rules, taking into account that coronavirus vaccinations are coming.

The current rules were set last spring as health officials scrambled to contain COVID-19. The rules limit the use of bunk beds, cutting housing capacity. The rules were temporary, but are still in effect eight months later.

With thousands of guestworkers arriving soon, merely rolling over last year's rules will hurt agriculture, according to the Washington Farm Bureau and labor supplier WAFLA.

The two organizations are petitioning Gov. Jay Inslee to repeal the emergency rules and order up ones that recognize the possibility of having an inoculated workforce.

"We're just trying to press the governor to give us some certainty," Farm Bureau CEO John Stuhlmiller said. "We're trying to stop this crazy thing of governing by (emergency rule) without public input."

Farm Bureau and WAFLA submitted the petition Jan. 13. The governor has seven days to respond. A governor's spokeswoman said officials planned to discuss the petition Friday.

The Department of Labor and Industries set the housing rules May 13. Farmworker advocates alleged the rules were insufficient, but a judge said that L&I did the best it could to react quickly to a health crisis.

Farm groups also had their complaints, though they didn't sue. L&I indicated in September it would revisit the rules. So far, it's extended the emergency rules every 120 days with only minor changes.

"We are continuing to gather information from the implementation of the emergency rules and will use it to inform potential permanent changes," an L&I spokesman said in an email.

"Because the permanent rules are still in the development phase, there's no estimate on how long they take to complete," he said.

About 15,000 guestfarmworkers that must be housed will arrive in the next two months, said WAFLA executive director Dan Fazio, whose organization helps farms recruit seasonal foreign workers.

Farms are ready to test and quarantine incoming workers, and the state should prepare to immunize them, Fazio said.

Vaccinations would align with L&I's concerns last spring that farmworkers in group housing were vulnerable to COVID-19, he said. "People living in congregate housing need to be prioritized."

The Health Department plans to vaccinate health-care workers, emergency responders and nursing home residents first, followed by people over 70 and people over 50 in group housing, including farmworkers. There is no timeline.

In the petition to Inslee, the Farm Bureau and WAFLA outline objections they have to the 8-month-old emergency rules.

The rules allow workers to travel and live close together in groups of 15. Farm groups say there is no scientific basis for limiting co-horts to 15.

The farm groups say that it's not feasible to keep windows open in cold weather. Also, the rules require farms to let in "community-based outreach workers." Farm groups say unscreened visitors risk spreading the virus to workers.

## Nurseries to host virtual marketplace

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — The Oregon Association of Nurseries, which represents nearly 700 wholesale growers, retailers, landscapers and suppliers statewide, announced Wednesday it will host a virtual marketplace event in February.

The event, called Nursery Guide LIVE, will take place online Feb. 17-18.

"Nursery Guide LIVE is designed to provide nursery industry professionals with sales and buying opportunities just as the spring shipping season kicks off," Allan Niemi, the association's director of events, said in a statement.

The virtual event, Niemi said, is intended to complement rather than replace the annual in-person Farwest Show, which is still tentatively planned for Aug. 18-20 if the pandemic is under control by then.

At the Nursery Guide LIVE event, association member exhibitors will have the opportunity to showcase their plant offerings, services and supplies.

Many nursery owners are already part of a printed guide published annually called the Nursery Guide book, which typically has 300 pages of listings and content about Oregon nurseries. February's virtual event was inspired by the Nursery Guide, but will push the concept further by giving customers the opportunity to interact in the virtual marketplace rather than simply read listings in a catalog.

The marketplace, according to the association, will have a simple setup and layout, allow unlimited product listings, permit multiple images and videos for each product and offer customers live video chat features.



Standing less than 56-in. tall and 53-in. wide, this high performer keeps a low profile while protecting your prized fruit.

 JOHN DEERE

The 5075GL is proof that good things do, in fact, come in small packages. Its narrow, low-profile combined with a powerful 75 HP engine and 61 PTO HP make this machine the perfect fit for the grueling demands of orchards, vineyards and other operations.

With its impressively small stature - less than 56-in. tall and less than 53-in. wide - **the 5075GL is our narrowest tractor yet.** Add to that the improved maneuverability and this machine easily navigates rows and clears those small, tight spaces when trees are laden with fruit, protecting the crop from damage.

Don't let the small size fool you. The 5075GL was built for power. Whether you're flail mowing, spraying, pushing harvest bins or trailering, this machine provides the engine and PTO horsepower you need to get the job done.

Visit [JohnDeere.com/Specialty](https://www.johndeere.com/specialty) to learn more

### John Deere Dealers

See one of these dealers for a demonstration

**Belcorp Ag, LLC**  
Modesto, CA

**Campbell Tractor & Implement**  
Fruitland, ID  
Homedale, ID  
Nampa, ID  
Wendell, ID

### Papé Machinery, Inc.

Moscow, ID  
Ponderay, ID  
Madras, OR  
Merrill, OR  
Tangent, OR  
Chehalis, WA  
Ellensburg, WA  
Four Lakes, WA  
Lynden, WA  
Quincy, WA  
Sumner, WA  
Tekoa, WA  
Walla Walla, WA

**Stotz Equipment**  
American Falls, ID

**Tri-County Equipment**  
Enterprise, OR  
La Grande, OR

 JOHN DEERE