

Plow brings Malian president to Forsyth

Alpharetta businessman meeting promise made in Africa 10 years ago

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Metro Atlanta helps with medical needs also. See page 13.

Build a better mousetrap, the proverb goes, and people will beat a path to your door. The same seems to be true of a new plow developed right here.

A low-cost plow built in Georgia is the answer to a promise an Alpharetta businessman made 20 years ago when he left his teaching position in Africa and the answer to the problem of developing nations trying to feed their people.

Walter Dean moved to the United States after teaching high school in an impoverished area of western Kenya. He made a promise to himself to go back and help those communities once he had become successful. Now that the head of Dean Machinery in South Forsyth has reached professional success, he is working to meet that promise.

A visit Dec. 10 by the president of the west African nation of Mali to South Forsyth to examine the plow, called the Plotmaster, has Dean closer to his goal. A few days after President Amadou Toumani Toure visited, his staff contacted Dean to tell him they are interested in purchasing some of the plows.

Dean's main business is supplying equipment for printing and converting paper, film, foil, tissue and flexible packaging products to companies such as Georgia Pacific and Carter Machinery. But the plow is more fulfilling to him because he can help communities directly in developing nations.

"This unit actually opens the

soil, it puts in seed, it puts in fertilizer and then it covers it in one pass," Dean said in describing the Plotmaster.

The plow is of simple design and can be pulled by draft animals such as oxen or cattle. That is more practical than a gasoline or diesel engine for developing nations such as Mali.

Dean developed a program on his own with a western Kenyan community to test the worth of the plow. Tests showed the Plotmaster reduced labor in the field by 60 percent to 80 percent compared to hand tilling and plowing. In Kenya, women do all of the farming. The efficiency of the Plotmaster allowed them to plant more crops.

"So they are making the transition from subsistence farmers to commercial farmers," Dean said. "They are able to plow and maintain a larger field of land."

Growing more means they are able to



DEAN TOURE

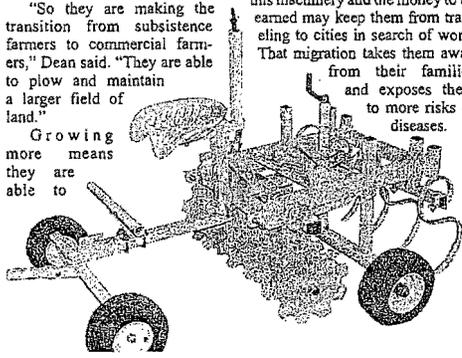
take the food the family does not need to market. Now the family has an income.

"We know it's working because I've got six or seven of them working in the field," he said.

The Kenyan communities were set up so the 10 to 12 families in each community shared use of the plow in planting season. At the end of the season they paid for the use of the plow from money earned selling their extra crops. And that money could then be used for loans to the families to buy seeds and fertilizer for the next season.

That is the beginnings of a community bank.

Another benefit expected from the plow is that men's interest in this machinery and the money to be earned may keep them from traveling to cities in search of work. That migration takes them away from their families and exposes them to more risks of diseases.



"And so it has become really a micro-economic tool beyond just the use of a plow," Dean said.

Just as important, Dean was able to introduce these farmers have not seen before, including radishes and carrots. That makes for a more balanced diet.

Before they were eating too much of the same kinds of food instead of having a variety, which would balance out their health," he said.

Toure had brought his minister of finance and minister of defense on the trip which also included visiting the Carter Center with other African leaders that week. Vince Farley, a former advisor on Africa to former President Jimmy Carter at the Carter Center, brought the Malian leader to the company.

Farley, a personal friend of Carter and a former senior advisor at the U.S. State Department, also works for Dean Machinery in a sales consulting capacity.

A few months ago the minister of health in Mozambique stopped by to see the plow, and late last year the minister of agriculture from Nigeria visited. And in March Malian Ambassador Addoulaye Diop visited with President Toure's son.

Dean believes his community approach to international devel-



BOB PEPALIS/Revue
Walter Dean, CEO of Dean Machinery, shows Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure how the plow and tiller blades of the Plotmaster can be raised and lowered for use in the fields and transport.

opment will work, but so far it is ignored by political leaders. In Dean's view, the most basic needs of people are health, water, education and nutrition. The Plotmaster can help fill one of those needs.

"You are giving them the bootstraps to pull themselves up. That's the key to sustainable development," he said.

The greatest terroristic threat is poverty, Dean said. By giving people a sustainable source of food they will have something they do not want to lose.

In the future these developing nations are going to need low cost solutions to help their rising populations feed themselves, according to Dean.

"Governments are going to have to give answers to people who are not happy and are miserable right now," Dean said.