



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Six farmers and agriculturalists from Romania are getting a first-hand look at Midwestern farms, manufacturers and ag researchers this week on a tour in the United States, hosted by Orthman Manufacturing of Lexington.

One of the stops on their tour Tuesday was 21st Century Equipment in Imperial, where they toured the company's recently remodeled and expanded facility.

Store Manager Larry Talbott, who conducted the tour, explained the local operation which employs 30 people in its sales, parts and service departments.

Alan Fairbanks, manager of Orthman's international business development division, said they see Romania as a country ripe for development.

He said the tour came about after several of his visits to the country, which included the farm of Arnaud Perrein, the first Romanian to use Orthman equipment in his farming operation. There are now three farms this fall that will be utilizing their equipment, Fairbanks said.

"He (Perrein) had an interest in coming here to see first-hand the equipment and felt he could get a group together," Fairbanks said.

Farmers there are interested in the latest technology, Fairbanks added, so that has been an emphasis on the tour.

The geography and climate of Romania are similar to that of the central U.S., and farm technology is spreading throughout Europe, he said.

Many farmers use GPS, and also have problems with pests like rootworms. Fuel is very expensive there, and there is a growing interest in no-till and strip-till practices.

Other tour stops include the Irrigation Research Foundation in Yuma, Colo., Valmont Industries in McCook, Orthman Manufacturing in Lexington and Monsanto in Gothenburg.

Also, several stops at individual farms were on the schedule, including Flaming Farms in Elsie, one of the innovators of the 1tRIPr strip till implement distributed by Orthman. Perrein uses that piece of equipment in his operation.

The group flew into Denver on Sunday and will return home this Sunday.

Doug Peterson, an Orthman sales rep that serves this area, was also on the tour.