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Meristem Gears Up to Help American Farmers Compete

*New Start-up is Designed to Deliver Quality Products
Direct to Farm Businesses for Less. Much less.*

COLUMBUS, Ohio, May 7, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Improved crop performance, high-quality inputs, and cost-cutting are the key drivers behind Meristem Crop Performance Group, LLC, a new start-up officially launched here today by crop input channel veterans Mitch Eviston and Rob McClelland, principals of the new company.

After a year of pilot-testing on more than a half-million acres with hundreds of corn belt growers, Meristem Crop Performance is ramping up to provide their unique high-quality, no-frills approach to select American farmers.

"Top farm businesses clearly understand the need to reduce costs if they are to successfully compete in today's global grain trade," says Eviston, Meristem founder and former senior vice president of WinField with 30 years of experience in every aspect of the crop input distribution business. "We've set up Meristem to be the lean provider of high-quality crop input additives to help these global players cut costs and increase yields."

Company leaders also revealed the new Meristem Board of Advisors, an all-star team of players with wide experience in a variety of disciplines within food and agriculture. Led by proven agribusiness leader, Rod Schroeder, the Meristem Board of Advisors will endeavor to deliver even more value to top growers. Eviston says nearly 200 such growers have already experienced the Meristem advantage.

"We are building the most efficient, direct-to-farm system which allows us to provide high-quality products that can save farmers up to 30 percent compared to conventional suppliers," he says, "and we've spent the past crop season working with top farmers to better understand exactly what they need."

Eviston is quick to admit, though, that Meristem won't work for everyone.

"We're laser-focused on serving large-scale growers who have their own spray rigs, on-farm storage, and infrastructure to support timely, effective application," he says.

Meristem's initial product portfolio includes crop input additives widely used by corn, soybean, wheat, sugar beet, cotton, and potato growers. The list includes seed treatments under the brand RACEREADY™, REVLIN™ plant growth regulators, TRUTRACK™ drift control, AQUADRAFT™ water conditioners and surfactants and HOMESTRETCH™ nitrogen stabilizers, micronutrients, and foliar nutritionals. BLUE DEF™ diesel exhaust fluid rounds out the current offering.

It's About the Economics

"This is just math," says Rob McClelland, past president of Farm Journal Performance Marketing and co-founder and past CEO of FLM Harvest. McClelland, an economist by training, explains that this kind of streamlining is long overdue.

"If we truly desire to help American farmers compete globally, we have to cut the fat from our distribution system," he says. Meristem, says McClelland, will connect top farmers directly with manufacturers to collapse a multi-step, distribution channel.

"We've learned from growers that e-commerce is not necessarily bringing the savings and ease of use they expected," says McClelland. "Savings come from tightening up logistics, not necessarily writing new software and over-promising on data solutions."

Among the pilot operations was Armstrong Family Farms, farming more than 10,000 acres near New Castle, Indiana. Craig Armstrong helped Eviston start Meristem to meet needs he saw in his own operation.

"We have to be aggressive in cutting costs if we are to compete globally," says Armstrong. "Meristem has figured out a way to make good products and ship them direct. That saved us a lot of money last season."

"The margins on a farm are pretty tight," agrees Todd McGuire, Urbana, Ohio. "It all comes down to return on investment." He says the Meristem products he's used have "worked well" and the money he's saved has been "substantial."

"We are always looking for ways to drive cost out of production and companies like Meristem are providing solutions to help us achieve that goal," adds Nathan Smith of Smith Farms in Sawyer, North Dakota.

An "All-star" Board of Advisors

"Intelligence and insight are valuable components of what we will bring to every Meristem client," McClelland says. "Farmers competing globally desire strategic thinking and deeper insight. Our board of advisors will help us deliver it to clients of Meristem Crop Performance."

Heading the board as chairman is Rod Schroeder, former chief operating officer of Land O'Lakes/WinField. Schroeder and his colleagues are credited with turning that organization into a multi-billion dollar distribution leader in providing inputs and innovative agronomic solutions to farmers. Currently an active ag entrepreneur and investor, Schroeder has a unique perspective encompassing how farmers will win moving forward.

"Farm businesses now operate in a global competitive environment where operators in countries such as the Ukraine and Brazil are busy lowering their production costs," he says. Boosting American farmers to keep their world leadership in crop production, he adds, means helping them make the most of every resource – land, people, inputs, and even the value of knowledge local retailers provide.

"Top farm businesses know they are competing in a world market and must make the most of every dollar they spend if they want to be in this game long-term," says Schroeder.

Schroeder will lead an experienced group of diverse experts and innovators including:

- Jeff Troendle, President, Hertz Farm Management
- Kess Berg, Ph.D., President/CEO, Advanced Agrilytics
- Tom Dorr, Past Under Secretary, USDA Rural Development and former President and CEO, U.S. Grains Council
- Kevin Born, CEO, Environmental Tillage Systems
- Justin Crownover, Owner, Lone Star Family Farms
- Owen Palm, CEO, 21st Century Equipment, LLC
- Kevin Van Trump, President/Owner, Farm Direction/Van Trump Report
- Rich Wildman, Managing Member, Agricultural Development Services, LLC
- Dave Alpert, Investor, Ag and Food Sectors

To learn more about these members of the Meristem board please visit www.meristemag.com/pages/team.

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Meristem Crop Performance Group, LLC (www.meristemag.com) is a joint venture between Old World Specialty Products and a group of talented agriculturalists with extraordinary backgrounds in agronomy and global agribusiness. Meristem works with farm businesses to drive out cost of production, increase productivity, diversify income, and increase access to new technologies. Meristem is keenly focused on providing products that can save farmers up to 30% compared to traditional market prices.

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