

Matriarch founders to drive a renewed forestry focus at Bell

Bell Equipment's strategy to revitalise its presence in the agriculture and forestry industry has been bolstered by an announcement in January that the Bell will acquire its long-standing partner, Matriarch Equipment.

Matriarch Equipment was founded in 2009 by brothers, Justin and Ashley Bell - grandsons of the late Bell Equipment founder, Irvine Bell. The company focuses on developing innovative equipment for a wide spectrum of industries. Reminiscent of the early days of Bell, Matriarch has enjoyed particular success in agriculture and forestry thanks to its 'customer centric' approach and quick turnaround of niche solutions.

The Bell-Matriarch partnership dates back to January 2014 and Bell currently distributes and supports the complete, locally manufactured Matriarch range of agriculture and forestry equipment. This comprises of highly innovative and relevant products for the sugar and forestry industries such as the UITECO5 and UITECO6 slew loaders for sugar harvesting operations as well as the FASTfell and Skogger for timber harvesting and extraction.

In addition, last year Bell collaborated with Matriarch for the conversion of Kobelco excavators for the forestry industry in order to provide customers with a professional and thorough approach to conversions.

Following the transaction Matriarch will become a wholly owned division of Bell and will continue to operate from its existing workshop premises in Felixton, outside Empangeni on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast.

Bell Equipment Chief Executive Officer, Leon Goosen, said that the acquisition creates a win-win scenario for the two companies and their customers. "The transaction gives Bell a renewed energy and focus on agriculture and forestry. These industries were the cornerstone of Bell in its formative years and we see great potential in strengthening and growing this important aspect of our business. The range of Matriarch products complements our range and enables us to better

provide a tailor-made full line solution to our customers. In return we bring to the partnership a respected and quality distribution and aftermarket support network that will provide Matriarch with access to more international regions and a larger market.

"We're excited to have Justin and Ashley back at Bell and carrying on the Bell family values. They've proven through their work at Matriarch that the ability to innovate and develop according to customers' needs is entrenched in the genes. We look forward to them joining the team and us working closer to grow sales and develop products in a number of diversified industries."

Commenting on the transaction, Ashley said: "Agriculture and forestry is where it all started for Bell. When the focus broadened to include construction and mining, with the development of the Articulated Dump Truck, some customers might have felt that agriculture and forestry had been side-lined but there is definite interest to revitalise Bell Equipment's presence in these industries and we look forward to playing a role in that."

"The transaction provides Matriarch and Bell with the additional resources needed to pursue new opportunities in terms of products and markets. Our products aren't new to Bell but are complementary to the Bell range. We have a few ideas to further enhance the product offering and add products to the line-up for agriculture and forestry."

Both Justin and Ashley have previously worked at Bell Equipment and Ashley says: "Personally, we're keen and excited to be back in the Bell fold and contributing to the continued sustainability of the business. In terms of the Bell family, it renews our commitment to the business and we are proud to be able to build on our family heritage."



Brothers Justin (left) and Ashley Bell of Matriarch Equipment.