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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**From Farmall to Quadtrac – LeaderBrand continues Case IH heritage**

A drive for yield from healthier soil prompted fresh food producer LeaderBrand to buy a top-of-the-line Case IH Quadtrac.

Richard and Gordon McPhail’s grandfather bought the Farmall tractor parked in the foyer of LeaderBrand’s Gisborne plant. For the company’s senior managers, the Farmall represents a family tie with Case IH that goes back decades.

The recent delivery of the Quadtrac through the Giltrap AgriZone dealership continues the McPhail’s treasured tie with the brand.

The arrival of the Quadtrac at LeaderBrand’s home base in Gisborne is a significant investment for the food company, which supplies round-the-clock produce to major retailers nationwide.

LeaderBrand has farms in Gisborne, Waikato, and Canterbury, growing about 3,500ha of fresh produce each year for process, domestic and international customers.

The Quadtrac adds to a growing fleet of Case IH machines around LeaderBrand’s paddocks and plant, helping LeaderBrand to meet constant commitments to major supply partners including Foodstuffs, Progressive Enterprises and Subway.

Other Case IH machines in the LeaderBrand fleet include multiple Maxxum 110 ROPS and cab units for a variety of applications from spraying, planting, fertiliser application and product transport, two Puma 165 CVT for bed forming and a Magnum 310 CVT for cultivation.

Most of the brand is in Gisborne but machines are also spread across LeaderBrand sites in Matamata and Ashburton.

In Gisborne, where the vertically-integrated LeaderBrand was founded in 1975 by Richard and Gordon’s father, Murray, large parts of the rich, fertile alluvial soils the city are devoted to crops including lettuce, broccoli, asparagus, spinach, Buttercup Squash, pumpkin and sweetcorn, as well as kiwifruit, grapes and lemons.

LeaderBrand chief executive Richard Burke says the business is continually challenging itself to produce fresh food at good values so yield is key. And yield is driven by soil health, which is where Case IH machines come in.

“Technology improvements and scientific gains means we are always learning better ways to do things. What worked 10 years ago has been superseded and our knowledge has improved The Quadtrac, coupled with single pass cultivation technology out of the USA, allows us to work ground with less cultivation,” he says.

In winter, LeaderBrand harvests about 300,000 head of broccoli a week from its fields in Gisborne, Bombay, and Ashburton, packed into about 10,000 crates. Freshness is everything in LeaderBrand’s business, so it’s vital to harvest and process produce like this as fast and efficiently as possible.

Virtually every product group is year-round, except seasonal squash and corn. The machines must be fit for purpose as conditions vary soil and climatic conditions vary between LeaderBrand’s production sites around the country.

In Gisborne, for example, heavy soil is too wet for winter groundwork, while at Matamata it’s too light to turn over in summer. So, the solution is to prepare those soils in opposite seasons. In some respects, that regional variation gives the company a buffer against the elements.

Plots around Gisborne can be as large as 40ha, many of which are planted in corn and squash over summer. The company leases a substantial amount of its land in the region and works with leaseholders on long-term improvements to that leasehold property, including soil testing for Ph to assess optimal cropping conditions and levelling works to improve drainage and productivity.

The Quadtrac is well-equipped for its LeaderBrand workload, more than 20 years of industry-leading track technology can be found in every Quadtrac tractor. The machine features four individually driven, positive-drive oscillating tracks and exclusive five-axle design which distributes weight evenly and consistently for increased traction with less compaction.

Each track maintains constant contact with the ground, giving the producer a great ride, optimal pressure, superior flotation, and better traction. For added appeal, tri‑point oscillation offers strength and durability.

LeaderBrand employs 200 permanent staff, with an additional 300 seasonal staff through summer harvesting. Productivity targets never stop, with demand for product from plant and customers. a big day of spinach harvesting yields 10 tonnes, for instance. On a tour of LeaderBrand’s plant, where the company has one of the country’s most modern salad production facilities, plant manager Richard McPhail summed up the demands of supplying a fresh, secure pipeline of food to customers, day in, day out. : “This is a warehouse, in and out. We don’t want produce sitting around,” McPhail says.

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**Images:**

1. 20200804\_135721.jpg
*Caption: LeaderBrand’s new Case IH Quadtrac 550*
2. P1040033.jpg
*Caption: Some of LeaderBrand’s Case IH Fleet*
3. P1040064.jpg
*Caption: (From left) Richard Burke, LeaderBrand; David Silk, Case IH NZ; Gordon McPhail, LeaderBrand; Andrew Giltrap, Giltrap AgriZone Ltd and Richard McPhail, LeaderBrand*
4. 20200804\_104357.jpg
*Caption: Farmall parked in the foyer of LeaderBrand’s Gisborne plant*