13/02/2018

New Holland presents NH^{Drive} autonomous T4.110F vineyard tractor ready for field pilot project deployment at E. & J. Gallo Winery

New Holland Agriculture is partnering with E. & J. Gallo Winery, the largest family-owned winery in the world, and loyal customer of New Holland specialty tractors, in a pilot project testing its NH^{Drive} autonomous technology applied to T4.110F vineyard tractors. This collaborative pilot program is focused on gathering agronomic and operator feedback on the use of this technology in everyday vineyard activities, with the ultimate objective of delivering autonomous solutions that are driven by the real-world requirements of winegrowers.

The pilot program is the latest step in the New Holland Autonomous Vehicle Program and its exploration of the various applications that can benefit the most from this technology. The Brand unveiled its NH^{Drive}™ autonomous solution in 2016 at the Farm Progress Show, and to date, has previewed it on the T7 Heavy Duty and T8 tractor ranges to illustrate possible row crop applications. The new pilot program with the T4.110F demonstrates that New Holland's autonomous solution is applicable to the brand's entire range of tractors, from high horsepower row crop all the way through to its specialty ranges.

Carlo Lambro, New Holland Agriculture Brand President, explained: "Sustainability and innovation are in New Holland's DNA; that's how we help our customers to farm efficiently and profitably today – and anticipate the way their needs will change. We believe that specialty operations, and in particular those in the vineyard environment, could significantly benefit from the introduction of autonomous technology, in terms of productivity and sustainability. Our partner in the pilot program, E. & J. Gallo Winery, shares our commitment to innovation and sustainability in viticulture, as well as our objective of providing an autonomous solution that will benefit winegrowers around the world."

The pilot program is taking place in an E. & J. Gallo Winery vineyard in California, USA, with T4.110F tractors fitted with NH^{Drive} autonomous technology. During the course of the initial research and development program, further progress has been made into the integration of the various component parts – specifically the sensing and perception elements and the signal receivers. As such, the T4.110F NH^{Drive} maintains its sleek overall silhouette.

This pilot is focused on a full range of vineyard maintenance and crop production tasks, which will provide feedback to further develop these activities during autonomous operation. These often repetitive applications, represent a broad cross-section of activities that are undertaken in vineyards, and are also representative of those carried out by the wider agricultural community.

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The data generated during the pilot will enrich the New Holland Autonomous Vehicle Program, providing real-world detail on the full range of possible automated and autonomous applications. These include Operator Assisted Autonomy, where the NH^{Drive} supports the operator in the cab, Supervised Autonomy, where the operator will be in the field and supervises unmanned vehicles, and ultimately Full Autonomy, with no local supervision.

The research carried out within the scope of the Autonomous Vehicle Program is also generating derived technologies that are already available to customers in the New Holland PLM®, Precision Land Management, offering. These are solutions, such as IntelliTurn™ – a system that fully automates end-of-row turning at the touch of the button – that help farmers in their pursuit of ever greater efficiency in their activities.

Autonomous operation has a key role to play in enhancing the business and environmental sustainability of farming operations. It results in a more efficient use of resources through the increased accuracy and repeatability of activities, as well as uniform productivity throughout the working day. It helps increase the operators' efficiency through assisted operation: rendering some of the base operations autonomous enables them to concentrate on key tasks that require greater skills. A further benefit is the upskilling of labor through the automation of repetitive functions. Quite simply, it will help advance the future of farming.

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