

FAST. FORWARD.



Load N GO delivers logistical, agronomic flexibility for evolving customer application needs

The Willard Agri Service Load N GO system is a practical innovation that underscores Willard's commitment to evolving alongside its large grower customers to meet their changing application needs.

As Willard customers – innovative, progressive growers in the Mid Atlantic – grow and evolve, they have gradually been adding their own self-propelled sprayers. Such a continuing trend would normally mean the loss of custom application business – and company revenue – for the retailer.

But when the Willard team saw this trend unfolding, they looked at ways to create synergies with their growing

customers. They created the Load N GO system that strengthens business relationships with existing customers and builds new ones by aligning with what large, progressive growers need to efficiently take care of fertilizer and crop protection applications.

“Oftentimes in agriculture we’re forced to make a choice between logistics and agronomics, and it’s unfortunate when we have to choose the former over the latter,” said Willard Agri Service Vice President Mike Twining. “But if we can leverage technology, tools and equipment to get the most out of our logistics and agronomics, that’s a true win-win. And that’s what we’ve really focused on with Load N GO.”



How Load N GO works

When a farmer customer who owns and operates his or her own sprayer signs on with Willard to use the Load N GO, it starts the process by supplying a highly nurse trailer to the grower at no cost. This trailer enables the grower to access all the high-speed, customized loading capabilities that support Willard's own application fleet at each plant.

A Willard crop advisor works with each grower to develop and make available customized at his or her local Willard location. Planned well ahead of time, each batch, stored in separate overhead tanks for loading into semi-trailer tankers, comprises the specific liquid fertilizer and crop protection products the customer needs.

“Generally, the Willard rep will meet with the grower in February or March to come up with their four or five mixes in their crop program. I communicate directly with the grower from that point onward,” said Josh Beyer, operations manager at the Mount Airy, Maryland, Willard facility. “They all include crop protection and fertilizer for post- and pre-emergence applications.”

Once a field has been assessed and crop nutrition and protection needs are confirmed, the grower then contacts his or her Willard location manager to communicate the necessary fertilizer and crop protection products and application timeframe. At that point, the Willard location team is prepared for the grower to call and schedule their customized loads.

Once a load is requested, the location team carefully mixes the required custom crop protection products, stages them in sprayer fill “pods,” then loads them on each Load N GO trailer separate from the main tanks set aside for water or liquid fertilizer blends. The blending and overhead staging happens on a call-ahead basis or even the day before a customer is picking up a load, enabling Willard's facility managers like Beyer to have any product blend loaded in 15 minutes or less with zero chemical exposure for the operator.

“We can have 16 different field-ready loads ready to go,” Beyer said. “The goal is to have batches ready in the overhead tanks for customers ahead of their arrival the next morning.”

During the blending and staging process, fertilizer and chemicals are metered out precisely, facilitating exactly the number of gallons needed for each load. Beyer then works with customers to provide the right transfer and handling equipment on each unit to ensure quick, safe transfer to the sprayer once the trailer has reached the field's edge.

"If a customer needs different pumps, valves, actuators or nozzle tips, that's where I come in," Beyer said. "We always talk with the customer to find out if they need to make any adjustments. That helps them get loaded, to the field and ready to apply more quickly and efficiently."

In all, Beyer said customers who sign on with the Load N GO system normally see load and transport times decline from around 45 to 15 minutes or less. And because the

systems are totally self-contained, the process is infinitely simpler and safer for the customer loading his or her Load N GO system and the applicator once it's reached the field. And the process eliminates the empty chemical jugs that otherwise require rinsing and disposal after loading. Cost is another benefit; the grower can lock in crop protection product costs at any time of the year without storing a drop of chemicals or fertilizer on the farm.

"There are so many fewer chances of mistakes, mishaps and contamination while loading. When I started, we were loading sometimes 25 jugs of chemical and adjuvants by hand at a time," Beyer said. "Now, chemical mixes are in a pod and ready to go when the customer pulls in. Growers don't have to worry about dumping anything on the ground or on themselves."

Delivering speed, safety and simplicity in the field

The safety of Load N GO extends well beyond the Willard facilities. Andrew Thomas knows that well. As one of the earliest self-applying growers and Load N GO customers the Marydel, Delaware, farmer, is no stranger to handling fertilizer and chemicals and the risk inherent to the work. He also knows when it comes to his liquid fertilizer and crop protection applications, time is money. With its combination of self-contained tanker equipment, mobility and ease of operation even when he's working alone in hauling and loading chemical in his fields, Load N GO has helped Thomas achieve new levels of speed and safety every time he has an application to make.

"Safety is number-one for us. With the Load N Go system, we don't handle the chemicals like we used to; we're not loading and stirring totes or carrying jugs, and we're doing very little measuring of products. Speed-wise, I can load my sprayer in probably about 10 minutes versus the way we were doing it before, which took 35 to 40 minutes. It's faster and a lot easier for that one man to load the sprayer," Thomas said. "The Load N GO unit has a three-inch pump so I can load the sprayer in about half the time as before. When you get empty, it's just a matter of driving down to the plant about 20 minutes, they load me in about 15 minutes, then it's about 20 minutes to get back to the field. And sometimes one trailer fills me up enough for a full day of spraying."

"Adding Load N GO has made us more efficient and helped us have a little more time to hone our operation."

— Andrew Thomas, Farmer in Marydel, Delaware

Load N GO's implications for evolving farms

The operational benefits of his partnership with Willard have had broader management implications for Thomas' farm. He's always looking for ways to evolve his operation to capitalize on new efficiencies and ultimately grow in a region where that's not always easy. With Load N GO, Thomas has been able to streamline a major part of his in-season work, enabling him to have more time to manage his operation and focus on ways to grow and evolve his whole farm.

"We have tried to do the best job we possibly can on everything. And we're always trying to grow our ground, which is obviously hard to come by. When it's available, we try to pick it up," he said. "We are always doing more with less. Adding Load N GO has made us more efficient and helped us have a little more time to hone our operation. Because of our improved spraying capacity, we were able to buy a bigger planter to become even more efficient during planting windows and cover even more acres."

Load N GO and the future of crop production

In his 44 years in working with Mid Atlantic farmers, Willard Agri Service sales rep Jim Beyer has seen massive crop yield increases as his customers have adopted tools and technology like Load N GO. He sees that trend only sharpening in the coming decade as products like fungicides, biologicals and micronutrients become more common in progressive farmers' agronomic toolkits.

"I see us pushing 300- to 350-bushel corn in the next decade," said Beyer, adding around half of his business involves Load N GO. "We work with very professional growers, and the majority of my customers are aggressive, innovative and want to produce all they can so they're leaders in the field. Load N GO is one of the newer examples of what we have always prided ourselves at Willard in providing: strong, mutually beneficial partnerships with our customers. Agriculture in this area is going to continue to evolve and we'll remain a leader with the most progressive growers as it does."

GO GROW.

When it's time to grow, contact Willard about Load N GO.
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