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Highlights from the **June 2013** issue of Photonics Spectra

Farmers Fuel Growing Market for Imaging Systems
As imaging systems improve, they are increasingly taking to the fields and the skies to send back crucial pictures of crop health. Climate change, population growth and increasingly scarce resources are putting agriculture under pressure. Farmers must be savvy with their land, harvesting as much as possible from the smallest possible space - a new phase in farming known as "precision agriculture." And photonics is one of the key contributors.

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Optical Sensors Watch What We Eat
Optics technologies are advancing food safety applications. Natural pathogens. Food fraud and adulteration. Bioterrorism. Food safety is more of a concern today than it's ever been before. Because the path from producer to consumer is long and complex - and often a bit of a mystery - it's important to be able to tell what's in our food. And new technologies are making it easier to do just that.

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Quantum Computers Appear - and Are Put to Work
Actual quantum computers are likely a decade or more away, but advances today are bringing them closer and closer. You can't yet buy them online or at a big box store, but the day of quantum computers has drawn closer, thanks to recent events. Many are advances involving the production, storage and manipulation of particles of light. That makes sense, given that photons are often the carriers of choice for quantum information.

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CO₂ Composite Cleaning Critical for Photonic Devices
Advanced CO₂ composite spray cleaning is an efficient and adaptable process for build-clean and maintain-clean protocols. A common aspect of photonic devices is the presence of critical components that emit, transmit, modulate, amplify, divide, switch or otherwise process light over the whole spectrum from ultraviolet over the visible to the near-, mid- and far-infrared. Particles and residues absorb, attenuate or obscure light.

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The Road from R&D to Commercialization
When US legislators formed NASA in the late 1950s, exploring space and landing a man on the moon were not its only missions. In a burst of foresight and efficiency (a quality not often attributed to today's Congress), they specified another mission: that any innovation engendered by the space program be captured, recorded, patented and made useful down on Earth. Thus began the era of technology transfer.

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Short-Pulse Q-Switched Lasers Enhance Precision Marking Applications
The demand for high-precision marking continues to grow, particularly driven by various microelectronics applications. Cost-effective lasers with pulse widths of several hundred picoseconds appear to be particularly well placed to satisfy the needs of these applications by offering a unique combination of favorable marking and cost characteristics.

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