

Corn is the New King

ALABAMA FARMERS ADDS A STEEL ANNEX AT RIVER TERMINAL TO HANDLE GRAIN VOLUME



Alabama Farmers Cooperative
Decatur, AL • 256-308-1671

Founded: 1936

Storage capacity: 5.3 million bushels at 18 locations

Annual volume: 25 million bushels

Annual sales: \$125-200 million

Number of members: 37,000

Number of employees: 2,500

Crops handled: Corn, soft red winter wheat, soybeans, sorghum, oats, feed ingredients

Services: Grain handling and merchandising, feed ingredients

Key personnel:

- John Gamble, vice president-grain
- Bo Rouse, superintendent
- Glen Smith, merchandiser

Supplier List

Aeration fans Chief Agri/Industrial Division

Bin sweeps Sudenga Industries Inc.

Bucket elevator Chief Agri/Industrial Division

Catwalk Johnson System Inc.

Contractor GSM

Conveyors Hi Roller Conveyors

Elevator buckets ... Maxi-Lift Inc.

Grain temp system .. OPIsystems

Leg belting Goodyear/All-State Belting

Level indicators OPIsystems

Millwright GSM

Steel storage Chief Agri/Industrial Division

Tower support system . Johnson System Inc.

Truck probe Gamet Mfg. Inc.

Truck scales Rice Lake Weighing Systems



Alabama Farmers Cooperative's river terminal at Decatur, AL, with new 1.5-million-bushel steel annex at right, viewed from the nearby U.S. Highway 31 bridge over the Tennessee River. Photos by Ed Zdrojewski.

The large barge terminal on the banks of the Tennessee River at Decatur, AL has stood on this site since the 1940s, and for much of its history, its function has been to unload grain shipped down from the Midwest to feed the numerous poultry and livestock operations in the area.

In fact, the terminal was built by the former Indiana Grain to provide an end users' market for corn from the Hoosier state.

Today, the 2.3-million-bushel terminal is owned by Alabama Farmers Cooperative, a regional entity serving 10 local cooperatives around the state, and now it ships more commodities out than it brings in.

That reflects the changing nature of agriculture in much of the South, especially in northern Alabama's Tennessee



John Gamble (right), vice president-grain, and Superintendent Bo Rouse.

Valley, says John Gamble, vice president-grain.

Cotton was once king in this part of the country, but no longer. Producers in the last 10 years have switched a lot of their cotton acreage over to grains and oilseeds, as cotton prices have been generally low, land rental prices have been high, and over the last two years, corn prices have skyrocketed.

"Corn is an especially good rotation crop for cotton," Gamble comments.

Corn also is a relatively high yielder compared to other crops, 150 bushels per acre or more in a year when the weather cooperates.

"We've felt we've needed more space for several years now," he says. That became especially true in 2008, when the cooperative lost a 200,000-bushel steel tank at Decatur. (See page 58.)

Steel Annex

This year, Alabama Farmers installed a 1.5-million-bushel all-steel annex at the terminal to the south of its old concrete house.

To construct the \$4 million project, the cooperative selected the Guntersville, AL contracting firm of GSM (256-878-7182), after taking bids from several construction companies.



Closeup of two new 750,000-bushel Chief Titan corrugated steel tanks making up the annex.

Price wasn't the only factor, according to Gamble. "We selected the contractor that we felt would do the best job for us," he says. "They've done work for us in the past in our feed division."

Work on the annex began the first week of June 2008, and the job was complete around Aug. 1.

The annex consists of a pair of 750,000-bushel Chief Titan tanks standing 105 feet in diameter and 92 feet at the eaves.

The tanks feature flat bottoms, outside stiffeners, 16-inch Sudenga sweep augers, a 10-cable OPI systems grain temperature monitoring system, and Bindicator level monitors.

A set of four 50-hp Caldwell centrifugal fans per tank supply a generous 1/5 cfm per bushel of aeration, with the assistance of four 2-hp roof exhausters and 20 roof vents.

Trucks deposit grain into a 250-bushel mechanical receiving pit adjacent to the annex. The pit feeds an 18,000-bph Chief leg equipped with two rows of Maxi-Lift 14x8 HD-CC heavy-duty buckets mounted on a 31-inch Goodyear belt supplied by All-State Belting. The leg is contained within a 12-foot-x-12-foot-x-

140-foot Johnson System support tower. Superintendent Bo Rouse says the system can unload a semi-truck in two to three minutes.

At the top of the leg, a two-way valve sends grain onto a pair of 18,000-bph Hi Roller enclosed belt conveyors running out to the new storage.

The tanks empty onto another set of above-ground 18,000-bph Hi Roller conveyors, which carry grain to the existing concrete house.

Still to be installed is an overhead 18,000-bph Hi Roller transfer conveyor, which will bring grain from the concrete house to the steel annex.

Incoming Grain

About 500 feet to the west of the main elevator, Alabama Farmers constructed a two-story steel scalehouse and grain receiving laboratory for incoming trucks.

The mini-complex features a pair of 80-foot in-bound and outbound pitless Rice Lake SURVIVOR® truck scales adjacent to the scalehouse.

The weighmaster can use an Apollo truck probe to sample incoming loads from a workstation on the second floor, which provides a good vantage point for seeing inside the trailers.

Ed Zdrojewski, editor



New 18,000-bph Chief receiving leg serving the annex, which empties onto a pair of overhead Hi Roller enclosed belt conveyors.



New two-story scalehouse features inbound and outbound Rice Lake truck scales and an Apollo truck probe.