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Rising Farmers a Great Fit

BY ROGER MILLER, GENERAL MANAGER

On August 1, Rising Farmers Grain Company officially became part of Premier Cooperative. Rising Farmers was formed 48 years ago, and general manager Delmer Castor has been leading the company for 43 of those years. In addition to the original location on North Rising Road in Champaign, the company has facilities in Bondville and Mahomet. You can read more about their history in Delmer's article on page 3.



Rising Farmers has been a very successful, grain-only company with minimal term debt and a very solid balance sheet. They reported \$552,000 of pre-tax income at their final annual meeting. They have been well managed, their facilities are well maintained, and they're a good fit for our cooperative.

Our goal has been to make this transition seamless for Rising Farmers customers, and I believe we have been able to do that. Delmer will continue as the manager for Rising, Bondville, and Mahomet, and customers will still be doing business with the same staff at those locations. The one change they will notice is computerized settlement sheets and scale software. It will be an advantage for customers and a challenge for the Rising employees as they learn the new program.

Grain hedging, human resources, and corporate accounting functions will be handled by the Premier staff in Champaign. We're excited about this new addition, and looking forward to serving Rising Farmers customers this fall and in the months to come. ○



Premier Cooperative continues to focus on improving customer service through capacity upgrades. The new 540,000-bushel bin at Broadlands, served by a new pit and 10,000-bushel/hour leg, is now complete.



Crop Tour Reflects Environmental Extremes

Once again, we discovered just how much variation one growing season can deliver as we conducted our 2011 Crop Tour. We sent 39 teams into the field, performed 312 yield checks, and evaluated 936 ears of corn. What we found were yields ranging from a low of 29 bushels to a high of 241. I think it's likely that many of you will see a 20-40 bushel yield difference in the same field, depending on the variety.

It's no secret that July was tough on crops in most areas. One of our locations received only two-tenths of an inch of rain in July, and five other locations received less than half an inch, all while experiencing 95° F days and temperatures in the 80s at night. One consequence of this, we believe, is reduced stalk strength. We found that the winds we've received have caused a lot of stalk lodging, and in some cases have snapped the stalk. It's likely the plants poured their resources into grain production at the ex-

pense of stalk development during the extreme July conditions.

Spring weather also caused some big differences in crop development throughout our territory. Farmers in the Ivesdale and Sadorus region were in the fields four to six weeks earlier than those in the Ellis and Reilly area. Consequently, some of the corn in that northern region is still in the milk stage, while southern crops are in the black layer.

2011 CROP SURVEY RESULTS

	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
B-Land/L-View	186	212	185	190	160	204	193
Bondville	186	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dewey	146	164	212	171	182	172	159
Dillsburg	133	181	187	168	198	169	155
Elliott	142	162	192	169	190	146	157
Ellis/Reilly	142	162	196	158	175	167	149
Fisher	148	189	211	170	185	167	146
Galesville	182	192	169	213	216	181	181
Gifford	154	154	187	184	176	179	139
Ivesdale	181	182	189	200	184	184	152
Indianola	154	205	191	170	188	N/A	N/A
Jamaica	154	182	184	170	188	N/A	N/A
Leverett	181	190	198	163	184	184	162
Philo	184	185	192	166	191	184	166
Rising/Mahomet	186/166	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sidney	180	197	194	193	182	196	169
Sadorus	168	178	195	176	189	184	146
St. Joseph	173	213	206	199	185	188	163
Thomasboro	165	192	212	201	188	188	165
Tolono	157	189	199	185	195	184	162
Average	164.6	184.94	194.39	180.33	186.44	179.81	160.25

Our sampling also indicated low test weights at this point, though we hope that changes as we move through the fall. While we were pleasantly surprised with yields overall, bear in mind that we were counting kernels, and kernel size is an issue with some varieties in some fields. Our agronomists have been weighing ears, and they are saying that some ears are 10% lighter than normal. Our estimates may be 10% high, depending on weight and kernel depth.

One real positive was that we found no ponding to speak of, as opposed to last year.

SOYBEANS NEED A BOOST... AGAIN

The soybean crop at this point looks decent. The plants have set sufficient pods for good yields, but we're starting to see some pods aborting due to drought. If we don't receive a decent rain, I believe our soybean crop could suffer substantially, as well.

We concluded the tour with our crop tour meeting August 24 at the Elks in Savoy, with the meal provided by Illinois Commodities. Mike Tumbleson, the featured speaker, talked about the future of bio-fuels, and Randy Bolen gave the group an update on market trends and price potential. ○

A Little Housekeeping

BY RON SNYDER, CONTROLLER

With harvest fast approaching and end-of-year tax reporting not far behind, this is a good time to make sure your accounts are set up the way you want them. Contact us as soon as possible for any new accounts you need to have set up prior to harvest. Also, be sure to let us know if you have any additions or changes to any of your grain splits. The earlier we have this information, the smoother the process will be at harvest.

We are also working hard to fine-tune everyone's account. We want to be sure each account has the correct name (including spelling, address, and taxpayer identification number). For tax accounting purposes, it works best

if the name we have for your account exactly matches the name you use for tax filing purposes. Notify the location you settle grain with of any changes or additions to your account information. Thank you for your cooperation. ○



Opening the Door to Added Value

BY MAYNARD BIRKEY, CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER

We're living in a time of extreme volatility in the commodity market, and there are very few producers I've spoken to who aren't interested in capturing more value from that market. At the same time, many of you have expressed some dissatisfaction with your marketing situation and the tools you've used in the past.

That's the reason we've been on the lookout for tools that might be a better fit for your marketing objectives. We've discovered a great resource in AgriVisor®, a company focused on providing unique marketing solutions. Our relationship with AgriVisor enables us to offer Premier customers a wide range of marketing tools.

One of the most interesting and innovative is the Insight contract. This contract draws on the market expertise of the experts at Doane, Pro Farmer, and AgriVisor, and basically sets up a model where these three compete with each other for the opportunity to market the customer's grain at a higher price. The sign-up period for an Insight contract for 2012 is open until the end of December 2011. Pricing will begin January 5, 2012 and continue through September 14, 2012.

KEEPING YOU IN TOUCH

The Insight contract also allows you to receive "phone blasts"—messages that come directly to your phone and detail the trade that has just taken place, the percentage of your contract that has been executed, and a bit

of the reason why. What's the benefit? They're finding that these blasts draw your attention back to the market and let you see the market factors these experts are focusing on.

That's increasingly important in a global market, as so many factors—supply and demand, fundamentals, oil, financial markets—are impacting commodities. In the very busy world of the farmer, these phone messages keep you connected to a fast-moving marketplace. It's also one of the main answers I give when someone asks me, "Why should I give up control of my marketing to someone who doesn't know me?" Because you can set up your contract to fit your marketing goals, then rely on these people who live and breathe the markets to pull the trigger.

I'd like to end with a note about the AgriVisor program and pre-harvest sales. The folks at AgriVisor would advise against putting more than about 20% of your projected crop into the program at this time. This year is a classic example of what dad always said: "Don't sell it until you've got it." Based on what we saw on the tour, a pre-harvest sale for 20% of the corn you thought you'd have may be turning into a contract for 30% or 40%.

At the same time, if you've contracted inputs for 2012, I'd strongly urge you to contract some grain to cover that. The bottom line: Talk to us about your marketing plans. We've got some great options available. ○



Bright Past, Promising Future

BY DELMER CASTOR, RISING/BONDVILLE/MAHOMET LOCATION MANAGER

In 1963, a handful of farmers pooled their resources and purchased the Leland S. Fowler Grain Company, located on North Rising Road just outside of Champaign. At that time, what they purchased was a 75,000-bushel wood house.

Over the years, those investors grew the company, adding locations in Bondville and Mahomet and expanding grain capacity to 2.85 million bushels. I became the general manager 43 years ago, and have enjoyed watching the company grow and serve our customers. We have quite a few long-term employees who have built really strong relationships with the farmers we serve, and we've been able to maintain those relationships as we've become part of Premier Cooperative.

This merger, which was approved by 90% of our stockholders, is a good fit for our company and provides greater marketing opportunities for our customers. Though we could load rail on the Canadian National (CN), we were largely tied to the truck markets. This merger gives us a greater ability to hit other markets with Premier's loaders on the CN and the Norfolk Southern. We'll have a chance to give the producers we serve better access to more markets.

I can speak for all of our people when I say that all the employees we've worked with at Premier have been extremely helpful in getting us up to speed on the new computer programs. It takes some getting used to, but this system had been tested and tried and will be a benefit to both customers and employees in the long run.

This year is a perfect example of how being part of a larger organization, drawing on a larger territory, helps spread the risk. We're happy to be a part of Premier, and are looking forward to a bright future. ○



The Rising Farmers board of directors and general manager were recognized at their final annual meeting for their cumulative 137 years of board service! Seated left to right: Marc Shaw, Delmer Castor, and Art Farley. Back row: John Corum, Larry Zahnd, Bruce Nickell, Greg Miller, and Jack Dollahon.



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It All Starts With the Seed



BY KEN BIERMAN, MANAGER, UNITED PRAIRIE LLC

I want to begin with thanking all of you for your business. It's been another good year, and we've seen lots of positive changes in our business as we continue to add new products and services to better serve you.

An area of emphasis for the coming year is on making seed recommendations that are right for each acre you farm. Because we understand how you farm and are involved in many of your agronomic decisions, we have an insight into your operation which someone who just sells you seed might not have. Our focus is on recommending seed that fits each field based on your management practices, soil test, soil type, tillage, and your farming style.

For example, if you're the first guy out in the field each spring, we don't want to recommend a racehorse hybrid for those first acres. A hybrid that's a dependable performer and does well in cool, damp conditions would be a better choice. As you're riding in your combine this fall, think about your goal for those acres next year. Then, let's sit down and talk

seed once harvest is in the bin.

SLOW DRAIN

Even though we're looking at a shorter crop than what has been the case in other years, don't ignore your soil test when putting together your fertility program. Because of strong yields in recent seasons, we've seen soil phosphate levels decline to a greater degree than potash. Insufficient phosphate can take out the top end of your yield. With these commodity prices, you want the fertility in place that allows you to get every bushel from every acre.

Fall fertilizer season will be underway soon, and we look forward to working with you as we prepare for the 2012 crop. Take care while harvesting this fall. ○

