

Central Prairie Hub continues to grow



The Central Prairie Coop Hub located on Highway 14 between Sterling and Lyons has undergone significant expansion over the past few years.

By RYAN CARLSON
As the needs of Farmers in the Central Prairie Co-op are constantly increasing, so is the size of its Hub location. The Central Prairie Co-op agronomy hub is located between Lyons and Sterling off of K14. What started as a small location offering mainly Bulk Liquid Fertilizer and Bulk and packaged chemical along with Application, as well as Bulk Fuel delivery. Roughly 30 years ago has turned into something much more. That something is the fastest growing sector of the agricultural industry, agronomy. In the past the hub has seen continued growth. Past products there have included a bulk seed treatment facility and liquid fertilizer area. "We offer dry and liquid application services as well," said Hub Manager Chris Savage. The Hub has an agronomy staff including Agronomist Brandon Warner CCA, Agronomy Manager Allen Shive CCA and Seed Trait Brent Werth. Five other employees help to deliver and apply fertilizer in customer's fields. The newest addition to the Hub is a dry fertilizer facility. It has an indoor unloading facility to keep product dry and in prime condition. As semis dump their load of material, it goes through an arm that completely empties 25 tons of product within 20 minutes. At the 30-year-old fertilizer facilities in Sterling and Alden it would take well over one to two hours to do the same thing. "This is much more

efficient. We have a much higher output," said Savage. From there, the product enters a holding building. Each product is put into its own labeled bulk bin. The nine bins include ESN, potash, Mesz, Urea, K-Mag, 11-52, 35 percent zinc, Pell Lime and 90 percent sulphur. Each of those products is used to formulate a specific blend of fertilizer to fit an individual farmer's needs. Though each product is different, they are all very much important and have a purpose. The total the facility holds is 2,600 tons. "Each product is needed by the plant for root upgrowth, or stem growth or some other purpose," said Savage. Selling products in bulk has several benefits both to the co-op and the farmer. The biggest of which is that the co-op can sell fertilizer cheaper, passing on savings to the farmer. "This is the only location that has all nine of the products the co-op offers in one location," said Savage. Crews started construction on the new dry fertilizer facility in Spring of 2016 and it was opened in September of that year. Since then over 180 semis have been inbound to the fertilizer plant and 2378 tons have went outbound to farmers from the facility. "Our biggest day of moving product we moved 151 tons a day. Considering a rail car holds 100 tons that equals a rail car and a half," said Savage. Moving product out of the facility is as orderly and efficient as it is moving in. Employees have job orders that shows

them what the farmer will need from each product. From there it goes into either one or both of their blenders. The two blenders allow the facility to double the output by using both at the same time. "If a farmer is coming after say 25 tons we'll put 12 and a half in each and double our output. Then, he'll only have to be here half as long," said Savage. Safety to employees is very important to Central Prairie, the company has built safety features right into the new dry fertilizer facility. Safety features include the construction of the bin doors. "The design creates an efficient, safe working environment," said Savage. Keeping product safe is built into the facility. The floor is heated to prevent moisture from turning product soggy and unusable. "Both protections allow the product to stay

in good shape all the way until it goes to be put on the ground," said Savage. Technology helps keep things moving along at the fertilizer plant. Ag logic allows employees to keep track of where the co-op's applicator trucks are at, how much they have left to do, and how soon they will be coming back for more fertilizer. "The technology makes it really nice for us here. It keeps everyone on the same page.

Proven to be very effecient with the Vairable Rate Application," said Savage. Savage added that the facility has been an investment, but it has already proven it's efficiency. Farmers have been impressed by the speed of service and quality of the product. On top of that, their facility can off load to many different vehicle sizes. The building is 70 feet by 148 feet in size. Savage said

the building is such that if Central Prairie needed to, they can add on to it. "It's built to last," said Savage. Central Prairie is proud of the fact of - Bulk dry fertilizer and application and VRT; Bulk Liquid fertilizer and application; Bulk and Packaged Chemical and Application; and Bulk seed and treatments. All in one location supplying needs to the farmers and looking into todays technologies.



The Central Prairie grain shed facility in Chase was completed in 2015. The shed holds about 1.1 million bushels of grain.

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The Dry Fertilizer facility at Central Prairie Coop Hub.



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