

JANUARY
2021

RiverCountry CO-OP



IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 REPORT FROM BRUCE MLSNA, CEO
- 4 BOARD OF DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT
- 5 FINANCIAL UPDATE
- 6 AGRONOMY UPDATE
- 7 FEED UPDATE
- 11 GRAIN UPDATE
- 13 RETAIL UPDATE
- 15 ENERGY UPDATE

YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL FARMING NEWS & MORE

Looking Forward to

2020... Covid, elections, volatile prices on farm commodities, weather events; 2020 had it all. Your Co-op had its share of challenges and adversity last year, much like your own businesses you operate. The positive side of this is we gained some experience in dealing with a lot of "out of norm" factors affecting our lives and businesses as we went through the year. So, I will review a little of last year and focus on what is happening in this year.

The Co-op held its first (and I hope only) virtual annual meeting last December, as the board felt the safety of membership was foremost on everyone's minds and a virtual annual meeting was held with the board and senior management only. We had a lot of good news to report and from my perspective, we made significant progress in synergies and savings to updates in the first year of the merger. Sales for the first year of merger were around \$170 million with a net savings of around 4%. We utilized the synergies gained from both co-ops to reduce expenses, used our volumes to create better buying opportunities and updated facilities and equipment to make your co-op better. The end result here is a patronage dividend that will be distributed in February.

As we head into February, we are almost six months into our fiscal year 2021. Looking ahead, we have been working on a two-pronged approach to creating revenue and being

more efficient. In our planning sessions last year with the board, we developed a five-year plan/vision and set-in motion some plans for 2021 that are now coming to fruition. Some of these are more noticeable than others, like the updating of equipment and facilities you may have seen or will see in the coming months. Other plans are in the works with more dialog needed to make sure we "get it right" for a lack of better words. The premise here is to let you know there is a plan to everything that happens and that the focus is on long term viability, top quality service to our members with patronage and equity distribution.

Our fall ended with some great grain quality and volumes in our grain plants. You co-op has storage capacity for almost ten million bushels and uses this volume to its advantage when we go to external markets. **With the increase in grain prices the last couple of months, we are seeing more optimism in our agronomy business heading into the spring.** As expected, agronomic inputs have increased also. We did layer in some inventory as our plants are full to capacity in all areas, so we took a position to protect our agronomy customers with prepay capabilities.

A successful winning business has superior people talent. We have added more sales people talent in several areas of the co-op to blend in the with the existing staff to create a company that has old and new

...we made significant progress in synergies and savings to updates in the first year of the merger

talent, because "people buy from people". We have seen some positive results as feed and agronomy business is up and, as we look towards spring, we are optimistic this trend will continue. We are adding new technology to equipment and new technology tools for our sales force to improve their skills. The flip side of this is adding or updating equipment to meet the needs of everyone so the progression on both sides remains the same.

Our retail business has seen some bounce back from the summer pandemic loss of revenues. The convenience stores create demand for cheese, meat and poultry products which many are grown locally and marketed at our stores. Other positives have been our parts stores, such as the NAPA brand that we operate. We have shown monthly increases in revenue and, overall as we look ahead to summer, hopefully we will get back to a more "normal" schedule of fests, fairs and other activities that produce revenue for us.

Thanks for doing business with your co-op. I appreciate it. I hope your 2021 is better than 2020. ■

2021

by Bruce Mlsna, CEO



*Left to Right, Front: Doug Geiger, Randy Mahr (President), Tim Hager, Steve Wall, Marc Boettcher
Back: Terry Gumz, Brad Juedes (Vice President), Jeremy Goessl, Eric Vogel (Secretary), and Les Danielson*

The Co-op's annual meeting was held virtually this year, due to the pandemic, on Dec 15th at the Sleep Inn & Suites in Eau Claire.

Two directors served their term limits and the board will be downsizing to 10 members for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Steve Natzke and Brad Zettler, both of whom had served on Heartland and other former Co-op boards, were thanked for their service.

Steve Wall was re-elected to the board for a 3-year term.

The board will again downsize to 8 members at the 2021 annual meeting.

Senior Management Staff



Brad Zettler and Steve Natzke receiving plaques from President Randy Mahr for serving on the Co-op board.



Marty Goss, Heather Barrows, Brad Podevels, Steve Hanvold, David Hartley, Paul Kerber, Brian Streveler & Todd Heise

Board Member Spotlight: *Eric Vogel*



My name is Eric Vogel, and I serve on the River Country Co-op board as a representative on the East side. I live about 10 miles North of Marathon City near the “big” town of Hamburg. My wife’s name is Misty and we have two boys AJ, 17 and Philip, 14. We farm about 550 acres and are in our ninth year of milking our 65 cows with a Lely robot. Back when we started, we were one of the first in the state to retrofit our tie stall barn into a free-stall and milk with a robot.

We raise all of our own replacements, as well as continue to develop a growing herd of beef cows, currently at about 35 brood cows.

I love most sports, especially playing church league softball, golfing and watching my boys play football. In the winter, snowmobiling is my escape from everyday life on the farm.

I have the privilege of being on multiple boards both in the past and currently, **my board life started when I was elected to serve on the former Customer One Co-op board back in 2010.** I was on the Partnership for Progressive Agriculture board for a number of years and I was a member of the FarmFirst Young Cooperators committee. I was elected on the former Heartland Cooperative Services board in 2018

and currently I am the chair of the Marathon County FSA committee. I was a member of the Hamburg volunteer fire department and then I got involved in local politics by getting elected as town supervisor for Hamburg back in 2015 and then elected chair in 2019. I’m also involved in the Hamburg Rainbow Riders snowmobile club where I’ve been president for the last five years, so I guess you can say I’m involved in numerous things off the farm, trying to support the community we live in. **It would not be possible without the support of my wife, Misty, who runs the farm when I’m gone!**



I think people and equipment are among our best assets here at River Country Co-op.

First and foremost are it’s people. The management team that was put together as a result of the merger is awesome. Though I’m sure there were some bumps along the way, I am impressed with how well

everything seems to be working. But it’s more than just upper management making that happen because, without the cooperation from the employees from both sides of the merger, that smooth transition would’ve been very difficult. That makes life as a director much easier.

After our people and management, the ability to upgrade equipment like we have been doing is huge. Having the latest and greatest also helps in attracting new employees as we continue to grow.

I would say my philosophy as a director is unison. If a board cannot agree on board decisions it’s not doing any good for its membership. At times when we have our disagreements over a topic, we seem to hash out our differences and make what we feel is the right decision and move forward.

I was on a board that lacked board unison and nothing got done. It’s really great and enjoyable to see how well your River Country board gets along.

My vision for River Country Co-op is to be your first

choice to do business with in our area. It will take people, service and integrity to make that possible. And I believe we are headed in that direction.

In closing, I would like to thank you, our membership, for your continued support of River Country Co-op. ■



Notes from Accounting & Finance

by Marty Goss, CFO | cfo@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-723-2828

What is a patronage dividend?

A patronage dividend is a distribution that a cooperative pays to its members. Patronage dividends are given based on a proportion of profit that a cooperative makes. River Country Co-op will be paying total patronage of \$700,000 in February 2021. Of this amount, 30% will be paid in cash and the remaining 70% will be in equity.

The exact dividend each member receives is based on two components: the dollar amount of purchases from the cooperative during the period September 1st 2019 to August 31, 2020, and the number of bushels of grain the member sold to the co-op during the same period. We are currently working with our auditors to establish the patronage rate and the minimum distribution amount.

What is a DPAD allocation?

DPAD stands for domestic production activities deduction. It is also referred to as a Section 199A(g) deduction. In general – the DPAD is a deduction on your income taxes – a benefit that a member derives when they do grain business with the co-op. The dollar amount of tax savings would be the amount of the DPAD deduction that you are allocated multiplied by your income tax rate. Please consult your tax advisor for specific details on how to utilize this deduction.

River Country Co-op passed through \$1,300,000 of this deduction, or \$.22 per bushel, for our fiscal year that ended August 31, 2020. The allocation to a member was based on the number of bushels of grain that the member sold to the co-op for the last fiscal year. A notice of allocation was sent out during the last week of 2020, and the amount will also be reported to members on Form 1099-PATR which must be mailed out no later than January 31, 2021.

Other Notes

Year-end reports have been mailed to producers. These reports detail your purchase activity with the co-op for the calendar year. If you would like to access year-end reports on-line, or be able to reprint a 1099 form, you should sign up for eAgVantage. This is a web-based program that allows you to access your River Country Co-op account. If you would like to sign up for eAgVantage, please send me an email at cfo@rivercountrycoop.com. I will send you instructions on how to sign up.

If you have any questions or concerns you can call me anytime at 715-723-2828. ■

GO PAPERLESS
with **eStatements**

*Secure
Convenient
FREE*

ACT NOW!



*Make your
payments
online!*

If you're interested in signing up for eStatements, email your full name and account # to:

theresa@rivercountrycoop.com



As We Head Into the Growing Season of 2021

by Steve Hanvold, VP of Agronomy | steveh@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-492-0875

The offseason in agronomy brought some changes to us.

We've had some additions to our staff and we've purchased some equipment as well. We have added a new precision agriculture specialist. His name is Jeremy Drewitz.

Jeremy comes to us with a wealth of experience, most recently in the Rochester, Minnesota area. I think our growers will find his experience and spin on handling technology very useful. If you have worked with our technology applications in the past, or would be interested in working with it in the future, I'd encourage you to schedule a time for Jeremy to come out and meet you.

We also added a sales person in the Marathon area.

His name is Nathan Eystad. His job will be to help coordinate sales efforts in the Eastern area of our geography. He'll spend some of his time working with River Country Co-op in the Marathon area and some of his time working with Marathon Feed and Grain. He's a recent Purdue University graduate. We look for great things from Nathan moving forward. Both of these gentlemen are fantastic individuals and compliment our staff very nicely. We'll also be replacing a couple of our applicators in the Bloomer location. As I write this article, we've got a great selection of individuals interested in coming on board with us. So, the positions will be filled very soon.

With our recent growth and exposure, we have a wealth of opportunities to bring young interns in to do work/study with us. We're planning on having one of these on the East side of the geography as well as one on the West side. Because of the number of applicants, I feel good about the probability

With our recent growth and exposure, we have a wealth of opportunities to bring young interns...

that we'll have some that can come in and contribute to our team. As some of them are seniors in college, that may leave us with the potential to hire them – or have first crack at them anyway – if they fit a position exceptionally well. We're looking forward to seeing a new crop of people interested in working in agronomy. It's always encouraging to see younger people getting into the business.

The major addition on the equipment side will be bringing airflow technology to the East side of the trade territory. Initially, it'll be the one unit. But, we're certainly willing to add additional units as demand warrants. Both the Dorchester area and the Marathon area have

experience with airflows from the past. I look forward to seeing what it can offer with the new types of airflow. Other than the airflow, most of the other equipment has just been done in upgrading assets that we already provided: new or upgraded sales and delivery trucks, a few new liquid and fertilizer trailers, etc.

I would comment, generally, on the fertilizer markets. But, the trend from fall has continued. **The government continues to be a challenge in the purchase/supply of fertilizers, as the tariffs that they threatened have become reality.** But we'll work through it. Hopefully, it doesn't equate to shortages and/or outages in the spring.

So, as we head into our second spring as a merged company, I wish everyone well and look forward to serving everyone. Thanks, again in advance, for your patronage and patience. **Have a fantastic 2021 planting and growing season. ■**



New airflow units are added to the fleet and are ready for Spring, 2021.



Introducing Rhett

by Rhett Kragness, Agronomist
rhettk@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-933-0255

Hello, my name is Rhett Kragness and I have been a part of the Bloomer agronomy team covering the Cadott/Boyd area as well as Lake Hallie and Chippewa Falls/Eau Claire area.

I joined the team in May of 2019 when I graduated from UW-River Falls. While in school, I interned with a few other ag retail companies while obtaining my Bachelors in Agriculture Engineering Technology and minoring in Agronomy. When not at work, I enjoy spending time with my daughter, Oaklynn, along with hunting and the outdoors. I also farm a couple hundred acres with my family and feed a small herd of beef cattle.

As I write this article, I think ahead to the coming spring and getting ready to put forth the plans that we have talked through over winter. Following up our plan with starter fertilizer and any pre-plant fertilizer needs then getting the seed at the right depth and all the nutrients it needs to produce a bountiful crop come harvest. If you still don't have a plan, there is still time to get together and talk about fertilizer and crop protection needs.

Just like in fall, checking over the combine to make sure it is calibrated and running properly to have an efficient

If you still don't have a plan, there is still time to get together and talk about fertilizer and crop protection needs.

harvest, it is just as important to check over the planter and make sure everything it is ready to go to have an efficient planting season and get the most out of the crop that we are putting into the ground. Give me a call and I will work up an agronomic plan for you. ■



Owen Mill Management

by Dean Schwartz, Owen Mill Operations Manager
deans@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-559-0670

Hello! My name is Dean Schwartz and I am the new Operations Manager-Owen Mill Complex.

I come to River Country Co-op with over 35 years of experience working in Agriculture.

I was born and raised in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. I started working on dairy farms when I was 12 years old and continued that tradition throughout my early years. I graduated from Chippewa Falls Senior High School during which time participated in a few different sports and was an active member of the local FFA Chapter. **I attended UW River Falls and graduated four years later with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Broad Area of Ag and minors in Farm Management, Animal Science and Agricultural Economics.**

My professional career experience includes working three years in the poultry industry, **28 years in the feed additive industry** and the last 4 years working in the feed industry. I have had the great fortune of traveling extensively throughout the United States and Canada. I



New feed delivery unit adding in January.

have made many lifetime friendships and it goes without saying, ag people are some of the best people in America!

Today I live in Eau Claire, Wisconsin with my wife Jolene. I have a daughter in high school, one son in college and our oldest son has graduated college and is working in the welding field.

My goals are to improve upon what the feed team is doing at the Owen complex now. Everything from quality to efficiency of operations. If you have issues on your farm with service or quality, please call me. **I look forward to meeting each of you.** ■



Growing to Meet Your Needs

by Brian Streveler, VP of Feed | brians@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-226-5637

This past year has been a year of growth, improved efficiency and improved bottom line. **In the first year of the merger, your co-op's feed division has increased cows fed by over 20%.** These results are from a more focused sales effort, competitive pricing, high quality feed and a larger sales area with the merger. We are working hard to keep this positive momentum going into 2021.

With that in mind, we continue to add to our team and our fleet of delivery vehicles. This winter we received two new bulk feed delivery units. This will allow us to be more efficient with delivery and give us more options for hauling larger loads and hauling different combinations. We are currently in the process of ordering a new truck for next fall. The objective is to be more efficient with newer equipment and provide better service with minimal downtime.

The new year has also brought with it two new key employees. Toby Hovde has rejoined our sales team at River Country Co-op. Toby has spent the last 4 years working in the dairy feed industry. Prior to that, Toby worked for Heartland Cooperative Services for over 25 years. His primary focus is dairy nutritionist and has the ability to work with any size dairy.

On the operational side of the business, we have hired Dean Schwartz as our Owen Mill Operations Manager. Dean will be focused on maximizing manufacturing efficiency, while providing excellent customer service. Dean has been in the feed business for most of his career and has

a wealth of knowledge to help enhance our feed business. We are excited to have both Dean and Toby on our team. Please see their articles to learn more.

We have seen major increases in feed prices this fall and winter. With dry weather in South America, increase in demand and a smaller crop than expected in the US, prices have been on a steady climb since August. Markets are at their highest levels in the last eight years. With high feed prices, we need to make sure rations are balanced and we maximize feed efficiency. Our staff of nutritionists are here to help maximize your herd's efficiency. We also have feed additives that can help improve efficiency with these high feed prices and can help keep feed cost under control. **Please call any of our sales team or any of our locations to discuss these options.**

As the feed markets trend upward, keep in mind that your on-farm feed is more valuable than ever.

As the feed markets trend upward, keep in mind that your on-farm feed is more valuable than ever. Your Co-op has a full line of inoculants and preservatives, from inoculants for your silages, and acid products for your bailed hay and TMR's. **We still**



Jim Ebert, Manager of the Boyd feed mill receiving a plaque from Bruce Mlsna, CEO for retiring after 43 years with River Country Co-op!



Brian Streveler, John Feiten and Toby Hovde talking feed.

have preseason bookings for these forage products and the plastics to cover your bunkers. We look forward to working with you to meet your farm's needs.

Thank you for your patronage! ■





Welcome to The Feed Team

by Toby Hovde, Nutritionist
tobyh@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-579-0691

Hi, I'm Toby Hovde and I joined the River Country Co-op team in 2021 as a Dairy Consultant, where I am able to work with farmers in the area, helping to improve animal health and to ensure they are getting the best quality feed for their farm. I have been a Nutritionist for over 30 years.

What I love most about my job is being able to help people and farmers, working with them to figure out how to become more profitable, or thinking of ways to make their farms more efficient and successful.

I was born and raised in the Rice Lake, Wisconsin, area where I completed high school. After high school, I traveled to Alaska for a few years where I worked on building log cabins before returning to Wisconsin. I earned my Bachelor's Degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls in Dairy Science. Upon completion of my degree, I went to work for a small feed facility in the Athens, Wisconsin area as a dairy nutritionist. I look forward to being a part of the River Country feed team. ■



Contracting Commodities

by Gerard Kaiser, Nutritionist
gerardk@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-573-7861

Hello, I am Gerard Kaiser and I am a Chicken and Hog Specialist. I typically work everyday with chicken and hog rations. If I am unable or unsure of the proper nutrition for a chicken or hog diet, I am able to quickly call or email a number of specialists who do know. These specialists are able to prepare diets for organic, Non-GMO, and conventional rations. They are able to replace corn or soybean meal in customized rations for focus consumers. These specialists also are knowledgeable in issues and concerns that confront these animals. In situations where you don't know where to access the answer of an issue or problem, give me a call, I will help.

I can also help with contracting Commodities. This was a year where contracting corn and corn products, soybean and soybean products, along with other protein sources and feed products could have been beneficial. **My focus is not to try and beat the market and achieve the lowest**

cost of a product, but rather to lock in a profit. Contract the commodities where you can make a profit on your milk, meat, eggs, or animals you market.

Some nutrition groups may not want to contract a farmer's commodities possibly because they don't want to be committed to a feed mill for as long as the contract lasts. **Some don't understand the function of a contract and how it works for you and what the limits are.** Others may not want to take the time to monitor grain futures and contract prices and to observe the developing trends. Possibly some of the nutrition groups feel that it isn't their job. That is the farmers responsibility and don't want to be blamed if markets change, fluctuate, or turn and head in the opposite direction.

We at River Country Co-op will take the time and explain how contracting works. Hopefully we can get together with interested producers and maybe dispel some of the rumors and misconceptions

farmers have about this important useful tool.

This was a year where contracting corn and corn products, soybean and soybean products along with other protein sources and feed products could have been beneficial.

River Country Co-op is a full service feed mill that doesn't rely on one sector to be profitable. We work together with the services we have to make the farmer profitable. Our first goal is to help you be profitable, and the rest will take care of itself. ■



Marathon Feed & Grain

by Todd Heise, GM of Marathon Feed & Grain
todcrishei@aol.com | 715-581-8889

As we are enjoying a Wisconsin winter like no other. It gives us time to prepare for our next busy spring season. It is hard to say what the rest of the winter will bring us, but we take what we get and look forward to the next season. **Marathon Feed & Grain had a successful financial year in 2020.** We are happy to be a part of River Country Co-op and look forward to the partnership as we move forward. **Our goal is to give a good return on investment for our customers.**

We are expanding and have outgrown our office space. Last summer we decided to add on. Our 60' x 38' office addition is in construction as we speak. Thankfully, the mild season was in our favor for the new addition. The firewall is complete and entry door to connect

the two buildings has been installed. The office addition will house our sales and office staff, 3 offices and 4-5 cubicles with a meeting/break room, restroom and utility room. The office will also have easy access to our new 70'x12' scale. The additional scale will increase efficiencies for our agronomy department along with decreasing wait times during grain season. Grain sampling and grading will be done at this scale.

We have also added a new truck to the fleet. In August, our semi was in a mishap. Thankfully, only the truck was damaged. The 2021 Freightliner Quad Axle with new Walinga Aluminum Body will provide faster unloading. **This past fall we added a new agronomist to our staff, Nate**

Eystad. Nate will be working with growers on plant nutrition, seed sales and agronomic work. Nate graduated from Purdue University in 2020 and we are glad to have him on board.

We also will have available an airflow unit for fertilizer application this Spring. We feel this will be a great additional service to our Agronomy fleet. Call Josh or Nate for details.

As always, if there are any questions or concerns, please give us a call.

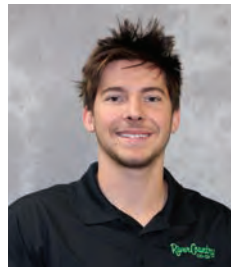
Wishing everyone a successful 2021! ■



Dumping grain last fall.



Started construction on the new office addition.



Nate Eystad

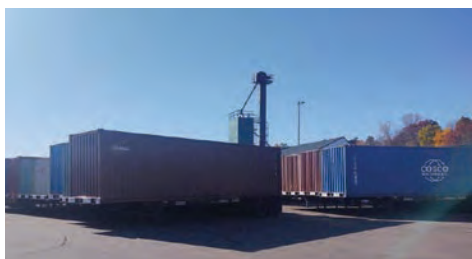


Grain Update

by Paul Kerber, VP of Grain
paulk@rivercountrycoop.com
715-797-8875



It is fun to write to you all after such a nice harvest with good quality grain abundant and market prices climbing higher nearly daily. It has been an exciting few months in the market since harvest. **Incredible how the world markets can change and how that effects the domestic markets in the United States.** After all the instability in 2020 it is nice to finally see a change for the better.



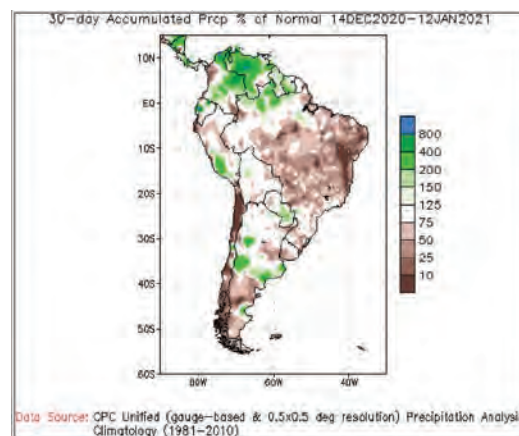
South American weather is dry. The areas effected the worst are in southern Brazil and most of Argentina. The dryness has made the crop quality in South America incredibly questionable, forcing end users in other countries like China to continue to buy their soybeans from the United States. This, coupled with lesser than expected yields on corn and soybeans nationwide, has caused the market to climb nearly two dollars a bushel on old crop corn and four dollars on soybeans for old crop.

New crop 2021 crop values are also at favorable prices, giving us an opportunity to sell and take some risk off. Often times the old saying of "A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush" comes into play when we start looking at nearly \$4.00 corn and \$11.00 soybeans. Call one of our marketing professionals to set up a marketing plan for old and new crop grain.

Overall last harvest was a much-welcomed change of pace from

the previous two years. The market prices are favorable for selling grain and it feels like 2021 might be a little nicer than 2020.

Operationally the grain department is identifying areas that we could improve efficiency and speed up grain handling to provide the best service to our customers. **We appreciate everyone's business this past year and look forward to working with you** on putting together market plans for your current bushels, as well as the crop we will be planting before we know it! ■



	2018/19	2019/20 Est.	2020/21 Proj.	2020/21 Proj.
			Dec	Jan
SOYBEANS				
		Million Acres		
Area Planted	89.2	76.1	83.1	83.1
Area Harvested	87.6	74.9	82.3	82.3
		Bushels		
Yield per Harvested Acre	50.6	47.4	50.7	50.2
		Million Bushels		
Beginning Stocks	438	909	523	525
Production	4,428	3,552	4,170	4,135
Imports	14	15	15	35
Supply, Total	4,880	4,476	4,709	4,695
Crushings	2,092	2,165	2,195	2,200
Exports	1,752	1,682	2,200	2,230
Seed	88	96	103	103
Residual	39	9	35	22
Use, Total	3,971	3,952	4,534	4,555
Ending Stocks	909	525	175	140
Avg. Farm Price (\$/bu) 2/	8.48	8.57	10.55	11.15

CORN				
		Million Acres		
Area Planted	88.9	89.7	91.0	90.8
Area Harvested	81.3	81.3	82.5	82.5
		Bushels		
Yield per Harvested Acre	176.4	167.5	175.8	172.0
		Million Bushels		
Beginning Stocks	2,140	2,221	1,995	1,919
Production	14,340	13,620	14,507	14,182
Imports	28	42	25	25
Supply, Total	16,509	15,883	16,527	16,127
Feed and Residual	5,429	5,903	5,700	5,650
Food, Seed & Industrial 2/	6,793	6,282	6,475	6,375
Ethanol & by-products 3/	5,378	4,852	5,050	4,950
Domestic, Total	12,222	12,185	12,175	12,025
Exports	2,066	1,778	2,650	2,550
Use, Total	14,288	13,963	14,825	14,575
Ending Stocks	2,221	1,919	1,702	1,552
Avg. Farm Price (\$/bu) 4/	3.61	3.56	4.00	4.20



Market Opportunities

by Jacob Korzeniewski, Eastern Grain Regional Manager
jacobk@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-255-2339



Sheldon Grain Plant

I'm glad to say that my first Wisconsin harvest is now in the books. We had very favorable weather that helped dry down the soybeans naturally, allowing us to fully utilize our corn unload capacity. **We were able to stay ahead of the corn drying very easily this year due to the lower moisture coming off the field.** Operationally we were able to stay ahead of harvest with little to no headaches.

When you are marketing your grain this year, whether in-storage or stored on the farm, be sure to contact me. **I will be able to keep you up to date on market opportunities.** It is important to have a tailored marketing plan that will help you manage your risk and I look forward to sitting down with you on the farm or in the office to start the development process. We have a variety of marketing alternatives that we can use together to manage the risk of selling grain in volatile markets.

We have seen some historic swings in grain prices. Since harvest, the corn market has gone up almost \$2.00/bu and soybeans almost \$4.00/bu. New crop prices have followed the upward trend, making the prices favorable to lock in some bushels to spread out the risk of the markets. Contact me about setting up firm offer contracts, cash contracts or any of the other marketing tools that we offer.

Thank you for your continued business with the Co-op. Keep an eye on your mail for your patronage check you will receive from doing business with the Co-op. Remember, all your purchases will receive a dividend. ■



Processing plant at Brokaw Grain
for roasting and flaking



Flaked "oats"



New semi and grain trailer purchased this September

Brokaw Grain



Athens Feed & Grain
Complex





Convenience Store Updates

by Heather Barrows, VP of Retail-West | heatherb@rivercountrycoop.com | 651-216-6510

Bring on 2021! I think all of us are happy to say goodbye to 2020 and move onto better things. One of those things at the c-stores is our new **River Rewards Loyalty Phone App** that allows our customers to ditch the card. Downloading our new app gives our loyal customers current up to date statuses of how many points they have accrued and how many coffees or pizzas they are away from a free one. **The app will also show you our current offers at our various locations**, for example, Terrific Tuesday where our loyalty customers will save an extra 5 cents off a gallon on Tuesdays. Each month approximately 10,000 loyalty cards are used across the stores. We are hoping to increase that number with the introduction of our new mobile app. Our goal is to continue to put the word "convenience" in our stores.

Our goal is to continue to put the word "convenience" in our stores.

Also coming in 2021, the stores will be updating all of the EMV payments at the pump. All the pumps will be upgraded so that the card readers at the pump can read the embedded chip credit cards. This will offer our customers a new level of security to pay at the pump with confidence.

Our stores keep moving along. Our customers in Prairie Farm enjoyed nearly 40,000 cookies last year, New Auburn can't keep bait in stock because of all the new ice fisherman

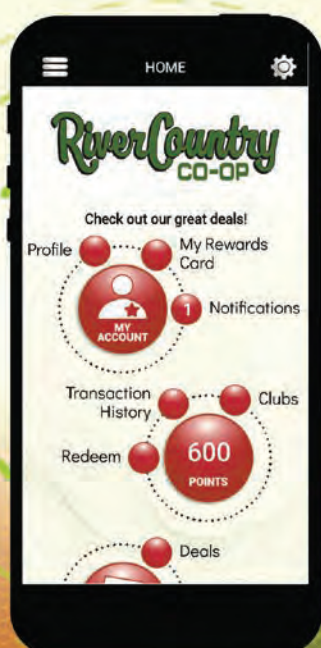
this year, Eau Claire Travel Center sold approximately 50,000 pizzas last year, and Eau Claire Third Street continues to keep the gambling industry afloat, increasing lottery ticket sales by nearly 20% over last year. Our objective is to keep our stores stocked with products and services that best fit our customer's needs and a few to satisfy their guilty pleasures! ■



Eau Claire Ferry Street C-store

SEE WHAT'S NEW!

DOWNLOAD THE **RiverCountry CO-OP** APP & GET GREAT DEALS!



29 PINES & The Lodge
715-874-2929



"Best steak in town!"



EMV & Fueling Containmentment Updates

by Brad Podevels, VP of Retail-East | bradp@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-897-2822

What is EMV? EMV stands for Europay, Mastercard and Visa, and it represents the new global standard for credit card payments.

The new standard means that all credit and debit cards now have **smart chips that significantly increase payment security**. Merchants now use EMV chips to enable POS terminals to increase security inside their stores. Installing flex kits in 2021 will give us the ability to read the credit card chip at the pumps outside. With April 2021 approaching fast, it will be hard to meet that deadline for a number of merchants with equipment back-ordered because of the pandemic. Nothing to fear, you are still covered from any fraudulent act should it occur.

Changes are also being made for underground piping and containments at many of our locations. The updates would include piping that comes from the tanks to the pump and containments that would catch the fuel in case of a ruptured pipe. There are three types of containments. One is located under the gas or diesel pump.



Dorchester C-store



Athens C-store

Another is designed to catch any overflow from the pump containments, and the last one is located where the delivery driver fills our tanks. Most of the cost involved in the project will be tearing out and replacing concrete and fueling islands. Even though we currently have not had any issues, the state will determine if a leaking issue could occur in the future. We all know Wisconsin winters can be very hard on equipment, especially frost in the ground. The deadline for these updates is October 1st 2021, which will also be hard to meet with the back-ordered equipment. Please be patient as there may be some fueling delays starting this Spring with a number of our locations as we comply with updates and 2021 state regulations.

Although we may have construction going on outside our stores, the inside will be open for business as usual.

Supporting farmers has always been a priority in our stores.

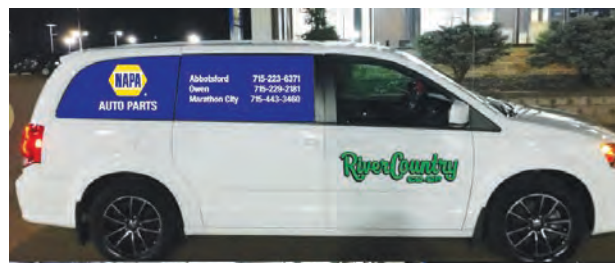
Milk sales in the River Country Co-op c-stores was over 31,000 gallons sold to our customers in 2020. All our c-stores, including the Napa auto parts locations, pay patronage back to our members on purchases.

Our Napa store in Abbotsford has now expanded inventory in our farming department

to help accommodate farmers and animal lovers. Some of these added items are: farm gates, bagged feed,



Marathon City NAPA Store



New courier van for NAPA locations

dog, cat and bird food, shelled corn, bulk kerosene, LP filling and hardware.

The Napa tool sale last Fall at the Abbotsford store was a great success offering an opportunity for our customers to buy quality Napa and Craftsman hand tools, large tool boxes, an assortment of Milwaukee power tools and much more at a sale price. The Fall of 2021 we will again invite our customers to participate in the Napa truck tool sale. **Our Spring Napa filter sale is one of the biggest and best in the area.** This gives our customers the opportunity to buy quality filters at a great sale price. If you're interested in our Spring filter sale, please contact one of our three Napa locations for more information. We thank everyone for your business in 2020 and look forward to meeting all your retail needs in 2021. ■



Our Commitment to You

by David Hartley, VP of Energy
davidh@rivercountrycoop.com | 715-492-0987

We are more than a year into the merger of our Co-op and I am proud to tell you that we are delivering on our commitments to you. **We have reduced our expenses in the Energy Department by over 7%!** We have successfully restructured the delivery areas of our company, capturing the efficiencies we promised. We are utilizing our energy software to streamline routing and the billing procedures. In a nut shell, we are committed to the success of your operation and for your cooperative.

As part of our continued commitment to your success, we have tailored programs to give you multiple options for your refined fuel needs. First, we now offer **contracts for gas and diesel that can**

be locked in for the entire calendar year, giving you better flexibility on when you use the fuel. You can also choose to lock in for spring or fall seasons only, if that works better for your operation. You have the option of Pay-As-You-Go or Prepaying to help with your cash flows. **We offer tank monitors** which give us the “eyes in the tank” to help insure you always have fuel when you need it. Our team of local drivers, salespeople and office staff are committed to your success by delivering the best service possible to help your operation.

You have a lot invested in your equipment, which is why we sell only Cenex branded gasoline and diesel fuel, ensuring the highest quality

products on the market. No other fuel or oil in the industry offer a warranty for your equipment which is better than the manufacturer. In the words of Ben Franklin:

“The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten”.

Success is no accident, you work hard on your operation and we will work just as hard to deliver the products and services you need.

Thank you for your past business and we look forward to working with you in the future. ■

New Fuel Delivery Truck Coming Soon!

Keep an eye out for a new fuel delivery truck coming to the Dorchester / Greenwood area this spring. Below are pictures of the build in progress.





1080 West River Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Contact us...

12 Mile CENEX
(715) 532-9654

Abbotsford NAPA
(715) 223-6371

Agri-Tech/Bloomer Grain
(715) 568-2934

Antigo Country Store
(715) 623-3516

Athens Agronomy
(715) 257-7676

Athens CENEX
(715) 257-7587

Athens Feed Mill
(715) 257-7591

Bloomer CENEX
(715) 568-2343

**Bloomer CENEX Shop/
Auto Value Parts Store**
(715) 568-2170/
(715) 568-2191

Boyd CENEX
(715) 667-3595

Boyd Feed Mill
(715) 667-3245

Brokaw Grain
(715) 870-2455

Cadott CENEX Truckstop
(715) 289-3953

Chippewa Falls CENEX
(715) 723-7005

Chippewa Falls Main Office
(715) 723-2828

Cornell Country Store
(715) 239-3173

Dorchester Agronomy
(715) 654-5401

Dorchester CENEX
(715) 654-5559

Dorchester Grain
(715) 654-6065

Eau Claire Ferry St. CENEX
(715) 832-0045

Eau Claire Third St. CENEX
(715) 835-2003

**Eau Claire Travel Center
- 29 Pines Restaurant & Bar**
(715) 874-2929
- CENEX Store
(715) 874-0290
**- Sleep Inn & Suites
Conference Center**
(715) 874-2900

Edgar CENEX
(715) 352-2414

Gilman CENEX
(715) 447-5746

Greenwood CENEX
(715) 267-6105

Jim Falls CENEX
(715) 382-4554

Lake Holcombe CENEX
(715) 595-4112

Marathon Agronomy
(715) 443-6100

Marathon City NAPA
(715) 443-3460

Marathon Feed & Grain
(715) 443-2424

Merrill CENEX
(715) 536-5600

Merrill Country Store
(715) 536-2491

New Auburn CENEX
(715) 967-2171

Owen Agronomy
(715) 229-4621

Owen Feed Mill
(715) 229-4613

Owen Main Office
(715) 654-5134

Owen NAPA
(715) 229-2181

Prairie Farm CENEX
(715) 455-1490

Sheldon Agronomy
(715) 452-5242

Sheldon CENEX/Shop
(715) 452-5111

Sheldon Feed Mill
(715) 452-5116

Weyerhaeuser CENEX
(715) 353-2612