



Dale (right) and Matt Wehmeyer with Oliver density separators at their newly expanded facility, Mascoutah, IL.

Wehmeyer Seed Company

From the beginning, quality has been priority number one

Wehmeyer Seed Company

Mascoutah, IL • 618-566-7022
www.wehmyerseed.com

Key Personnel

- Dale Wehmeyer, President
- Lisa Wehmeyer, Vice President
- Terry Twenhafel, Vice President
- Matt Wehmeyer, Vice President
- Nick Yarber, Plant Manager
- Nicole Bisher, Production Specialist
- Bob Bischoff, Business Development Manager, AgriMAXX Wheat

Company Profile

- Independent, family-owned business.
- Certified wheat and soybean seed production.
- AgriMAXX proprietary soft red wheat.

AFTER 18 YEARS IN THE BUSINESS of producing, conditioning, and marketing wheat and soybean seed, Dale Wehmeyer, owner, president, and founder of Wehmeyer Seed Company, Mascoutah, IL, found his company at a crossroads.

The first 15 years provided sales growth and increased custom production volume, but by 2010, growth was being limited by conditioning capacity. To expand into the future and maintain their reputation for producing high quality seed, Wehmeyer Seed Company (WSC) made the decision in 2013 to expand conditioning capacity.

Quality Focus

WSC was founded in 1995, after Wehmeyer left his position as manager of the University of Missouri's Foundation

Seed program, Columbia. Dale and his wife Lisa relocated to Lisa's hometown of Mascoutah, IL, about 25 miles



Dale Wehmeyer

southeast of St. Louis, MO, where they began farming an area situated under the glide path used by U.S. Air Force pilots on their final approach into Scott Air Force Base.

The first years in the seed business consisted of contract soybean production and supplying local customers with certified soft red winter wheat seed.

“My university work experience gave me a practical understanding of the importance of maintaining good physical seed quality,” Wehmeyer says. “As we were planning to start a new seed company, one of our top priorities was to select quality seed varieties well adapted to our Southern Illinois soils and growing conditions. The other priority was to deliver clean, well-conditioned seed to our local growers and our contract seed customers.”

With an emphasis on consistent, high quality seed and personal relationships, the company’s contract soybean production steadily grew.

In 2000, Terry Twenhafel joined the company as part-owner and vice-president bringing 15 years of Fortune 500 finance experience.

The company’s location in southwest Illinois allows it to be flexible with soy-



A vibratory conveyor moving soybean seed into an Anex Mfg. cup elevator with a low vertical drop.



Satake Evolution color sorters.

bean maturities from the mid Group 3 to late Group 4.

To accommodate increasing volume and customers’ request for more storage, WSC underwent three warehouse expansions during the first 18 years, growing from 7,200-sq.-ft. in 1995 to 80,000-sq.-ft. in 2007.

In 2007, the company joined the AgVenture Inc. (AVI), Kentland, IN, nationwide network of regional seed companies to market AVI corn, soybean, and alfalfa products.

“Being in a part of the AVI network has been a great experience for both us and our customers,” Wehmeyer says.

AgriMAXX Wheat

During the early-mid 2000’s, local farmers expressed a desire for improved wheat varieties better adapted for the lower Midwest. In 2008, WSC launched AgriMAXX brand wheat seed. Sales quickly grew and distribution expanded into other soft red growing regions.

“We discovered our variety performance was exceptional in other geographies across the SRW growing areas,” Dale says.

In 2010, Dale and Lisa’s son Matt joined the family business to head up the sales and marketing division as the management team planned to take the AgriMAXX Wheat brand national.

AgriMAXX Wheat has grown to become a supplier of soft red winter (SRW) wheat varieties across the United States.

“Due to the brand’s expansive growth, we now place AgriMAXX wheat seed production at member companies across the 25-state growing region, providing local production and regional adaptation of our varieties,” Matt says. “There are both marketing advantages and cost savings in keeping production closer to customers.”

In 2013, Bob Bischoff, formerly with Incotec and Syngenta/AgriPro, was hired as business development manager for AgriMAXX Wheat, LLC.

“I look forward to being back in the wheat industry with a progressively growing company,” says Bischoff. “We are dedicated to bringing the highest performing wheat within the industry to every farmer. The future looks bright.”

Facility Expansion

By 2009, WSC’s soybean production was exceeding the facility’s existing conditioning 8-hour capacity. To expand conditioning volume, the facility began operating two shifts.

“We were not in a position to operate 24/7 which essentially put us at capacity,” says Twenhafel. “But we trusted that if we added capacity, our ability to produce, condition, and package a high ►



The existing pallet feeder and robotic palletizer have sufficient capacity to be retained and used in the expanded facility.

quality seed product would continue to expand our contract conditioning business.”

“Looking forward, we could either continue with our passion for maintaining our high standards for seed quality, or we could increase our rate of output, but with our existing equipment, it would be difficult to do both,” he says.

One option would have been to simply put in longer days, running the conditioning equipment more hours.

“During our initial 18 years, we were successful in part because we never compromised seed quality for operational expediency,” says Dale. “Our employees share our passion for quality. Extending our operating hours would require us to rely on more part time help.”

Equipment Suppliers

Design and construction
Bratney Companies, Des Moines, IA

Airscreen Cimbria - Delta.
Color sorters Satake USA Inc.
Cup elevators Anex Mfg.
Gravity separators... Oliver Equipment
PLC controls Allen Bradley
Control programming Bratney Co.
Robotic palletizer* PASCO
Seed counter..... Satake OptiCount
Seed treater..... Gustafson

*Existing equipment

In 2012, Dale sat down with Bratney Companies, Des Moines, IA, to begin planning a facility expansion.

Since this was a facility expansion and not a greenfield project, Wehmeyer imposed an important design restraint: no new roof space. The new equipment must fit within the existing tower’s horizontal-style footprint.

The main operational requirement: the equipment must be arranged to have the least physical impact on seed quality. From start to finish, seed in the new tower is transferred between equipment with vibratory conveyors and horizontal cup elevators.

“Our approach to determining processing capacity for the renovation was based on utilizing existing tower space,” Matt explains. “We choose Cimbria Delta’s biggest cleaner because it fit with our existing surge tanks. Once that was

determined, we designed the remaining components to fit the cleaner’s capacity.”

With the seed industry’s strong focus on appearance and precise seed count, Wehmeyer added two color sorters and an Opti-Count scanner.

“The color sorters are the most effective pieces of equipment I’ve ever seen in removing visual seed abnormalities,” says Plant Manager Nick Yarber. “I am very pleased.”

The Opti-Count scanner automatically checks seed size on a continuous basis to ensure proper packaging, labeling, and seed treatment application.

A new Gustafson GLCPS seed treater was installed to match the plant’s capacity. “We’ve gained capacity, drying time and seed treatment accuracy with this seed treater,” says Dale. “As the seed size changes during processing, we can program the treater to accurately change treatment rates.”

The existing robotic palletizer and packaging equipment were retained.

After the expansion, the facility has annual conditioning capacity for one million bushels soybean seed plus 300,000 bushels wheat seed.

“We’ve always built our business around doing an honest, professional job,” Wehmeyer says. “We put a high quality seed product in the bag, and as a result, develop a special relationship with our customers.

“Our updates and upgrades make our plant safer for our employees, and take the quality of our seed products to a higher level. Together, this allows us to grow for our customers’ benefit well into the future,” Dale Wehmeyer concludes.

Joe Funk, editor



Dale and Lisa Wehmeyer (left) and the Wehmeyer Seed Co. employees.