



Cache River Valley Seed

Automated bulk bagger boosts rice seed packaging capacity

Cache River Valley Seed, LLC

Cash, AR • 870-477-5427
www.crvseed.com



Company Personnel

- Randy Woodard, President
- Marty Eaton, General manager
- John Dunman, Plant manager

Company Highlights

- Established 1961.
- Rice, soybean and wheat seed production.
- New plant 2000, upgraded 2005.

Suppliers List

Air screen Cimbria Delta 108
Gravity table Crippen
Disc graders Carter Day
Precision graders Carter Day
Bag fillers Chantland, Taylor
Bucket elevator LMC, Crippen
Treater Gustafson SS1000
Wrapper Wulftec Automatic

Cash, AR is not a large community. When everyone is home for Sunday dinner, the population of Cash might edge over 300. It's the sort of place when the pastor knows exactly who is not in church and everyone else knows why.

In contrast to whatever else is in Cash, it is hard to miss the Cache River Valley Seed Co. on the east edge of town—a business that seems to be intent on single-handedly keeping every warehouse builder between Cash and Jonesboro, AR—15 miles to the northeast—in business.

“Together our seven warehouses

Cache River Valley Seed General Manager Marty Eaton (left) and President Randy Woodard.

cover about 130,000 sq. ft.,” says Partner and President Randy Woodard. “Our production is increasing at such a rate that each year we either build another warehouse or lease more storage space in Jonesboro.”



“More storage” is not a new cry, it has been a constant mantra throughout the history of Cache River Valley Seed.

A Brief History

The company’s roots go back to 1961 when a rice processing mill was converted into a seed processing facility for McAlister Seed Services in Cash. In 1972, the family-operated business’ name was changed to Cache River Valley Development Corp. when J.E. McAlister, one of the founding partners, became sole owner.

Contract seed growers were added in 1972 when the family farm was no longer able to meet the increasing demand for rice seed. Two years later, young Randy Woodard joined the business after graduating from Arkansas State University and went to work for McAlister.

Sales volume, conditioning capacity and warehouse space gradually increased until 1987. In that year a major expansion increased capacity. Increases in sales and in contract production necessitated the expansion.

In 1997, one of Cache River Valley’s largest toll or contract customers—MFA, Inc., Columbia, MO—purchased one-half interest in the company. It was renamed Cache River Valley Seed LLC (CRVS).

“At the time, MFA was concerned about its ability to continue licensing Roundup Ready technology,” Woodard



An operator inspects a filled bulk bag as the Chantland 4360 automated bulk bag filler automatically fills the next bag. By raising the baffled bag above the pallet during filling, bags are more densely filled and deform less during warehouse storage.

says. “MFA’s involvement in CRVS gave us a boost in both volume and stature so that we were able to attract more toll business in addition to growing sales. That is when our growth began to make significant annual increases.”

The growth of CRVS hit a bump in May, 1999 when fire destroyed the con-

ditioning facility and portions of the warehouse space.

“Overnight we had to make some vital, strategic decisions. Where did we want to be in 10 or 20 years? Did we want to continue on the path of a small, modest-size albeit successful company? Or did we want to step up and make the commitment to become the dominant regional player? We chose the later,” Woodard says.

In hindsight, Woodard thinks they would have made the same decision within a few years, but with their production plant in ruins, there was no tomorrow.

“I never want to say that it is a good thing to have a fire,” he says. “But once we had the fire, the situation forced us to look at who we were and where we wanted to go. If we wanted growth, there was nothing holding us back.

“Existing capacity was no longer an issue, there was none. We were not being restrained by the money we had spent to upgrade the plant, that investment had gone up in smoke. We had a clean page on which to draw our plans. That is the day we began earnestly planning to build more warehouses.”

More Storage

Seven months after the fire, trial production began in the new facility. ►



Most of the conditioning equipment is on ground level or a low-level mezzanine.

In January, 2000, CRVS new production facility began full production on the familiar location east of Cash.

The design features a horizontal layout. All the major equipment is either on ground level or on a low mezzanine. Slow bucket elevators provide vertical elevation, horizontal seed movement is on vibratory conveyors.

"It is much easier and more convenient to monitor and service equipment when it is easily accessible to employees," General Manager Marty Eaton says. "It is also easier for employees to communicate with each other when they are working on the same level."

The new facility was constructed with a little more than 10,000 sq. ft. of conditioning space plus a 25,000 sq. ft. warehouse and over 100,000 total bulk storage capacity.

Almost before the paint was dry on the new warehouse, it was evident to Woodard and Eaton that their vision for storage space was inadequate.

"Our sales and contract production grew at a rate faster than we had even hoped for," says Eaton. "Also making demands on storage space for finished seed are the 2,000-pound bulk bags. It takes about 30 percent more space to store the same amount of seed in bulk bags than in single-unit paper bags."

Since the new facility was completed, CRV has added 90,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space. In 2004, a major expansion added new capacity to package bulk bags, the predominate choice of CRVS's customers. Plastic boxes are occasionally requested by customers.

Automated Bulk Bag Filler

The 2004 expansion focused on increasing packaging capacity and reducing labor requirements. At the heart of

General Manager Marty Eaton with a Cimbria Delta 108 air screen installed in 2004.



the new bulk bagging line is a Chantland 4360 automatic bagger.

This is a fully automated system that dispenses an empty pallet, fills the bag to the correct weight, lowers the filled bag onto the waiting pallet and indexes the filled bag into position for the forklift. All the operator does is place the empty bag into position and connect the neck for filling.

"With this new bulk bag filler, one operator plus a forklift driver can do more in eight hours than five were previously able to accomplish in a 10-hour day," Eaton says. While the conditioning side runs a 24-hour day, the bagger can keep up by running a single eight-hour shift."

The Chantland 4360 routinely fills 40-45 bulk bags an hour, equivalent to 33-40 single paper bags a minute. That is one bulk bag every 80 or 90 seconds.

"The 2004 expansion is an invest-

ment in our potential to better serve our existing customers while meeting the needs of new toll customers and increasing seed sales," Woodard says. "We now have both the production capacity and seed products to sustain our growth and become the dominate seed company in the South."

Branded Seed Products

The CRVS markets its own brands of Dixie wheat and MorSoy soybean seed. It also markets NK soybean and corn seed, AgriPro COKER wheat seed, RiceTec hybrid rice, Clearfield herbicide tolerant rice plus the widely used public varieties.

"In 1991, as we reviewed the direction the soybean seed industry was headed, we realized that we could not achieve our goals for growth without a distinct brand to differentiate our products," Woodard says. "We developed the MorSoy brand products specifically for the Southern market. We have created a brand that stands on its own apart from CRVS."

With a catalog of branded products, growing demand for contract seed conditioning, increasing sales and capacity to condition two million units annually, it may not be long until CRVS President Randy Woodard once again must call out, "More storage."

Joe Funk, editor

An irrigation well pumps water into a network of ditches to flood irrigated seed rice production.

