

# Repurposed Elevator

ALABAMA FARMERS TRANSITIONS FACILITY FROM ALFALFA PELLETS TO GRAIN HANDLING



**Alabama Farmers Cooperative**  
Decatur, AL • 256-353-6843

**Founded:** 1936  
**Storage capacity:** 5.1 million bushels at 13 locations  
**Annual volume:** 25 million bushels  
**Annual sales:** \$125-200 million  
**Number of members:** 37,000  
**Number of employees:** 4,500  
**Crops handled:** Corn, soft red winter wheat, soybeans, sorghum, oats, feed ingredients  
**Services:** Grain handling and merchandising, feed ingredients

**Key personnel at Guntersville:**

- Steve Wellman, location manager
- Darrel McClendon, supervisor
- Olan Jones, merchandiser/ weighmaster
- Phyllis Gibson, secretary

**Supplier List**

- Bucket elevators**.....Chief Agri/ Industrial Division
- Contractor** ..... Guntersville Sheet Metal
- Control system**..... S&W Electric
- Conveyors** .....Hi Roller Conveyors, Chief Agri/Industrial Division
- Elevator buckets** ..... Maxi-Lift Inc.
- Grain dryer** ..... Zimmerman Grain Dryers
- Millwright**..... Guntersville Sheet Metal
- Truck probe** ..... Gamet Mfg. Inc.
- Truck scales**..... Rice Lake Weighing Systems



*It's a busy day at Alabama Farmers Cooperative's barge terminal in Guntersville, AL. The cooperative acquired the elevator in 2011 and has upgraded it extensively since then. Photos by Ed Zdrojewski.*

When Alabama Farmers Cooperative (AFC) acquired a 1.2-million-bushel concrete grain elevator that had been storing alfalfa pellets produced by Consolidated Blenders late in 2011, the coop crew had their work cut out for them to get the facility ready to handle grain.

The elevator originally was built as a barge unloader in 1958 anchoring a row of grain facilities on the Lake Guntersville section of the Tennessee River at Guntersville, AL (256-582-3121).

After years of alfalfa pellet storage, says Facility Manager Steve Wellman, gearing up for grain handling was a challenge. (Wellman is a 31-year grain industry veteran, the last 10 years with AFC.)

The first chore was cleaning up after the alfalfa operation that took over a month and many man-hours to prepare for the installation of the new equipment and anticipated hot work. Once the cleanup was far enough along, AFC proceeded with a series of upgrades in and around the



*Steve Wellman*

elevator. The cooperative engaged a local contractor, Guntersville Sheet Metal (256-878-7182), to serve as the general contractor on the \$2.527 million project.

S&W Electric, Birmingham, AL (205-595-8103), upgraded the elevator's electrical systems and installed an electronic control system.

The upgrade was completed by June 2012.

"This investment will allow

Alabama Farmer's Cooperative to grow our business and be better positioned to service the grain producers in an area of the state where we already have a significant presence," stated AFC Grain Division Vice President John Gamble.

**Improvements**

Among the changes AFC made at Guntersville:

- A pair of 70-foot Rice Lake pitless inbound and outbound truck scales were installed near the facility office, with an Apollo



*Natural gas-fired, 4,000-bph Zimmerman tower dryer was moved to Guntersville from another cooperative location.*

*New 20,000-bph Hi Roller reclaim enclosed belt conveyor delivers grain to a Chief jump leg and another Hi Roller running out to the barge docks on Lake Guntersville.*

truck probe next to the inbound scale. AFC is in the process of installing an AgTrax scale automation system.

- The coop moved a 4,000-bph Zimmerman tower dryer from another coop site across the lake and installed it at the east end of the concrete facility. The dryer is fed from two 50,000-bushel concrete wet tanks with a Chief 5,000-bph leg. Dry grain from the dryer is elevated with another Chief 5,000-bph leg and deposited into one of 10 silos, with the aid of a 5,000-bph Chief drag conveyor. Dry grain also may be moved directly into a 20,000-bph Chief jump leg that can send it onto a 20,000-bph Hi Roller enclosed belt conveyor out to the barge dock or onto a below-ground receiving screw that runs back to the main house leg.

The natural gas-fired dryer was used in 2012 to dry some 750,000 bushels of corn, which arrived at the facility with an average moisture level of 23%. “We had some electrical glitches at first, but since we resolved them, it’s worked out great,” says Wellman.

- The original open belt conveyor in the elevator tunnel was replaced with a 15,000-bph Hi Roller belt conveyor that reclaims from any one of 39 concrete silos and carries it to one of two house legs for distribution. Seven of the original hex bins on the south side of the house were bottom-tapped to allow direct loadout to a 20,000-bph Hi Roller running along the length of the concrete house. These drops are controlled with a series of electric gates to allow for multiple reclaim points at one time. The Hi Roller deposits grain into the jump leg that elevates it onto the conveyor running out to the dock.

*Ed Zdrojewski, editor*

