



□ *Editor's note: This is one in a series of features that will spotlight businesses in Imperial. The community has a thriving business community, and all residents may not realize the extent of services and products local businesses provide. This feature will be a regular offering throughout the year and beyond, and will include those businesses with a commercial address located outside of the home.*

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

In 1912 a group of producers established the Coop Petroleum Oil Company, the “seed” of the present Frenchman Valley Coop. It sold petroleum products to producers.

Later on, a cooperative grain company was started. In 1968 Frenchman Valley Farmers Coop was formed when the two companies merged.

No longer a part of the Coop, a lumberyard, a John Deere Dealership and coal sales were also offered.

At present, the Coop in Imperial is comprised of the office at 143 Broadway, a service station, warehouses, agronomy facilities, a seed warehouse, a fertilizer tank farm, a dry fertilizer building, a wholesale manufacturing plant, concrete elevators, a feed mill and warehouses, a bulk oil storage and office building, a bulk oil plant and fuel facilities, and another wholesale agronomy facility.

Currently under construction is a new office building across the street from the present office.

Manager Jim Chism said the Coop offers a full complement of livestock feed products; fertilizer; crop protection products; liquid and dry anhydrous ammonia; seed; a full range of fuel products and gasoline; bulk oil; tires, batteries and accessories; grain (corn, wheat, soybeans, milo, sunflowers, millet and white wheat); crop hail and federal crop insurance; a patron finance program; a patron investment program; a crop scouting service; chemigation service; propane for heating, and producer weather/GPS stations.

The Coop also procures all of the corn for the Trenton ethanol plant, Chism said.

The Coop is owned by its members. There are 2,051 farmer-members who vote, and about 4,000 participating members who are non-producers.

That's the total for all of the Coop's branches. Those are found in McCook, Perry, Culbertson, Palisade, Hamlet, Wauneta, Benkelman, Enders, Grant, Venango, Chappell, Lodgepole, Sidney, Potter, Dalton, Dix, Kimball, Bushnell, Ovid, Colo., and in Pine Bluffs, Lindbergh and Burns, Wyo., as well as the Imperial site.

The board of directors includes President James Haarberg, Vice President Dale Dueland, Secretary Eugene Haarberg and Directors Max Kaiser, Duane Grosbach, Steve Leibbrandt, Jay Geu, Rich Keiser, John Culek Jr., William “Dude” Tines, Larry Flohr and Associate Directors Jim Broz and Brian Kroeker.

Chism said Frenchman Valley Coop is one of the biggest employers in Imperial. There are 78 full-time and two part-time employees. Overall the Coop employs 213 full-time and 45 part-time people.

The overall annual payroll is \$12 million with benefits and payroll taxes. In Imperial the payroll with benefits and payroll taxes is \$4 million annually.

Chism said, “The average person probably doesn't realize the breadth of services we offer.” He cited input financing and insurance sales, the patron investment program, and precision

agronomy application as a few.

Implemented as of the first of December was a fuel contracting program for non-producers. If an individual or company uses 50 gallons of fuel or more per month, they can fix the fuel price for a year, regardless if the price goes up or down.