

Pioneer Cuts Ribbon

Pioneer Soybean Plant In New Madrid Opens For Business

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HUNTSVILLE, AL.

DuPont business Pioneer Hi-Bred executives held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday, Sept. 30, as part of its grand opening celebration on its largest soybean production plant in the world. The \$60 million parent and commercial soybean seed production plant is located in New Madrid County, Mo.

Construction began in May 2010 on 129 acres of land. The plant began operations Oct. 1 as soybean harvest was getting under way. Currently the plant employs more than 65 people, with the option to hire more during peak operational needs.

As a soybean seed production plant, facility employees will focus on contracting acres with area farmers for production of Group IV and V soybean seed varieties for the South, as well as harvesting, cleaning, bagging and distributing the seed. The warehouse itself is the size of five and one-half football fields.

Production Location Manager Nathan Bengtson opened the program, welcoming special guests and visitors. He called it "an exciting day."

Judd O'Connor, Vice President-Regional Business Director for the United States, said the facility represents a \$60 million investment in the community, customers and business.

"I feel very, very fortunate to be a part of working with the State of Missouri to bring jobs to this area," he said. He acknowledged state and government officials for working with Pioneer to locate the plant in southeast Missouri.

U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson thanked Pioneer for recognizing "that we have the best workforce in the state."

"I want to thank Pioneer for understanding that our farmers produce the safest, most abundant food supply. I know that you will be happy with the work that our folks will do for you," she said.

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon called the effort to build the plant "the latest investment in the state of Missouri by an innovative, high tech company."

"This marks the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between a great company and the Missouri Bootheel," he said. "These are exactly the kind of high tech jobs that will move our economy forward. We are bringing a world class company to Southeast Missouri, creating jobs for the region and sending a clear signal to the world that when it comes to the bio-science sector, Missouri means business. We want Missouri to continue to be the place where science and research companies come to grow." Alejandro Munoz, Vice President-Americas and Global Production, called the plant a tremendous asset to the entire Pioneer organization.

"This state-of-the-art facility is the largest production plant we have in the world. This location is essential as we continue to grow our business and provide high quality, top-performing soybean products to our growers."

Several factors figured into Pioneer's decision to locate this facility near New Madrid, according to Greg Wichman, Pioneer's business director for the Southern Business Unit, located in Huntsville, Ala.

"There were a few things that we wanted to make sure that we could do," he said. "First and foremost, we wanted to be able to produce a quality product for our customers. Growing soybeans in the South presents some challenges. One of the challenges we face are the diseases that are more prevalent the farther South you go. This location keeps us away from some of that disease pressure, still allows us to produce varieties that are needed for the area, but doesn't get us so far South that we run into challenges producing some of the maturities we need to produce."

Wichman continued, "This area is very unique. It allows us to produce some full-season varieties, it allows us to sell in the deep South, yet the soils and conditions allow us to deliver high-yielding, high-quality soybeans to our customers."

He also said there were several other factors that drew the decision to this area. One is the incredible supply of water with all the irrigation capability; another is the highly productive soils that are very consistent across the Bootheel area and Southeast Missouri; and the third is that Southeast Missouri has some of the most progressive farmers around.

"That combination really affords us to have high yield and high quality," Wichman said. "We can just be a much more reliable supplier with our Group IV and Group V soybeans at this location, rather than going deeper into the south."

Transportation is also a favorable component. With the interstate arteries in this area, there is easy and quick access both north and south to the Delta and throughout the Delta. There's also quick access into western Tennessee to feed that marketplace as well.

The seed from this plant will travel to a wide area, although it will not go overseas.

"We really don't ship our soybeans worldwide," he said. "This plant will cater basically to a couple of business units. From here it will go all the way to the Gulf; and then we'll also

provide seed to other business units to the west.

"The one thing this plant allows us to do is diversify our production. We've actually scaled back our production in some parts of the east, because this facility gives us the ability to be a reliable supplier. So some of the products we



Missouri Governor, The Honorable Jay Nixon called the effort to build the plant "the latest investment in the state of Missouri by an innovative, high tech company." Photos by John LaRose, Jr.



Greg Wichman, Pioneer's Business Director for the Southern Business Unit, located in Huntsville, Ala., stated that "first and foremost we wanted to be able to produce a quality product for our customers."



Cutting the ribbon are from left to right: Clyde M. Hawes, Presiding Commissioner, New Madrid County; Judd O'Connor, Vice President-Regional Business Director; The Honorable Jay Nixon, Governor of Missouri; Nathan Bengtson, Production Location Manager, New Madrid Soybean Production Plant; The Honorable Jo Ann Emerson, U.S. Representative and Alejandro Munoz, Vice President Pioneer-Americas & Global Production.

produce here will go to Virginia and North Carolina."

One remarkable thing is the size of the plant actually grew after the groundbreaking last May. Wichman explained how that happened.

"This is the first production plant that Pioneer has built in over a decade, so one of the things that we were looking at is to get a feel for the capacity that we would need to meet the demand. As we started getting involved with the scope and the size of this project it was determined that we needed two lines of operation. Again, part of that is because this plant will cater to so much geography. We felt that we needed the ability to run at least two varieties at a time so that we could quickly put them in a bag, condition them and move them. So in order to meet the needs of our customers and the growing demand for our product, this plant ended up being the largest soybean production plant that we have in our inventory today."

Some of the plans Pioneer has because of the new facility include further investments in research.

"We've added to our research programs for Group IVs and Vs which is really providing growers a deep portfolio of products that are performing well. The performance the newer varieties are delivering to growers is increasing the demand for Pioneer soybeans, and this new plant will allow us to meet that demand in a much more reliable manner."

Pioneer already has a strong presence in Missouri, including a research facility in Miami, Mo., as well as a network of sales professionals selling corn, soybean, sorghum and wheat seed in the state.

The company has also expanded in other locations across the U.S. and there are some additional resources focused on the South including the recent expansion of the research center in Union City, Tenn. A new research center that should open later this year is focusing on drought research in Kinston, N.C. Other company expansions include: A new research facility and space for 400 new research positions based in Johnston, Iowa; expansion of drought research in Manhattan, Kan., and Plainview, Texas; a new research center in Ithaca, Mich.; and expansion at Hermiston, Ore. These additional resources represent the commitment by Pioneer to provide better products for the specific needs of growers' unique operations. Δ

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