

Epley Brothers Hybrids, Inc.

Family seed business' conditioning facility is a commitment to the future



Steel framework of Epley Brothers Hybrids' 6,000 sq. ft. clear-span conditioning building with receiving annex. Surge bins and bulk storage bins have been installed ahead of conditioning equipment installation. (August 2012 Popp Engineering photo).



Epley Brothers Hybrids, Inc.

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Key Personnel

- Paul Epley, Owner-Operator
- James Epley, Owner-Operator
- Wayne Epley, Owner-Operator
- Robert Epley, Owner-Operator
- Billy Rover, Sales

Company Profile

- Family-owned, established 1939.
- Conditioning tower new in 2012.
- Conventional and GM hybrid corn seed.
- Soybean seed.
- Four-state farmer-dealer network.

EPLEY BROTHERS HYBRIDS, INC. – a third generation, family-owned seed company – spans the development of the hybrid seed corn industry in the United States.

Established by brothers Kenneth and Floyd Epley in 1934, the company history begins when ears of double cross hybrid seed were dried on steel racks, shelled by hand, and sold in hand-tied bags.

Remnants of that bygone era are still on display in the small building that served as a parent seed house for Kenneth and Floyd.

Juxtapositioned across a small, grassy yard from the old parent stock house is a new 2012 conditioning tower complete with optical sorter, and refuge-in-a-bag (RIB) packing equipment designed to blend and pack the most current, eight-trait stacked GM corn hybrids.

Nearby are three corrugated steel grain bins outfitted with Jelco dryers

that are still in use.

Holding the entire seed business together is a family belief that their seed products are a personal expression of the family's commitment to take responsibility for their customers' yields and profits by providing highest quality hybrids designed specifically for local



Epley Brothers Hybrids main office.

growing conditions.

The operation of the seed business is managed by Kenneth's four sons – Paul, James, Wayne, and Robert.

“Our motto is to provide dependability of yield to our customers,” says Bill Rover, Kenneth's grandson. “We as a family are directly involved in the business and closely supervise every detail of growing and conditioning the seed that carries our name.”

All Epley's corn and soybean seed is produced on the family's 1,500 acre farm plus on a few additional rented acres.

Farmer Dealer Network

Epley Brothers seed products are distributed in Iowa and three surrounding states – southern Minnesota, eastern South Dakota, and eastern Nebraska through a network of farmer dealers.

“The hybrids we produce are selected for the growing conditions in our market area,” says Paul Epley, one of the four owner/operator brothers. “There is a vast difference between Epley Brothers hybrids and those mass-produced by other companies.

“With conditions being so different in the same maturity area as you cross the country, the practice of mass-producing hybrids usually eliminates the best hybrids for a specific local area,” Paul says.

Epley's marketing targets grain and dual-purpose customers. Most of their



Pat Epley, plant operator, with the Satake color sorter.

customers operate less than 5,000 acres.

“Each year we produce hybrids with a wide range of agronomic strengths and with varying combinations of disease and pest resistance to suit our customers' varied conditions,” says Wayne Epley. “When we look at the GM traits available to us, we select traits and genetic selections that will work together to serve a purpose for our customers.

“Our seed products are more than items in a catalog. They represent our pledge to our customers that we will create better than average adapted seed so that they can make the most profit

from every seed they plant,” he says.

To meet the varied needs of their customers, the company's 2012 corn seed catalog includes 56 hybrids ranging in maturity from 95 days to 113 days. The product list includes nine Epley Gold Star conventional hybrids with no GM traits.

New Conditioning Facility

Ten years ago, the Epley brothers made plans for a multi-phase expansion of their seed business. Those plans, however, were derailed by some unforeseen events. However, in 2011, their plans were revised and updated by Popp Engineering, Ames, IA with construction set for 2012.

“In some ways, we are fortunate that our facility has been designed now rather than 10 years earlier when we could foresee RIB (refuge-in-bag) packaging or the need to provide expanded seed treatment options,” Rover says. “What we have now is a facility capable of answering our need for top quality seed through the foreseeable future.”

Construction on the project was ▶



Billy Rover (Kenneth Epley's grandson) stands in front of the seed parent stock house first used by Kenneth and Floyd Epley in the 1940s where they made seed selections. Rover holds a selection/drying board with several hand-selected ears from a bygone era.

not completed until November, after this issue of *Seed Today* was published.

Major features of the new facility include:

- Westrup cleaners for flat screen sizing.
- RIB packaging for bulk, mini-bulk, and single-unit containers, open-ended blending percentage.
- Satake optical sorter.
- Oliver Mfg. gravity separator.
- Bayer CropScience seed coaters.

Seed exits the Westrup cleaner separated into two flat and two round grades. Next in line is the Satake sorter and the Oliver gravity separator.

“By putting the optical scanner immediately after the Westrup cleaner, we are able to pull out the off-color small rounds which takes some of the pressure off the gravity,” says Rover. “We still have the option of going to three round sizes if needed.”

Using a flat screen is slower than using a drum sizer, but Epley brothers feel it is more gentle on seed. In order for customers to get 99% or better planting singulation, grading is necessary.

“With this new facility, we are light years ahead of where we were,” Rover concludes.



Westrup sizer (above), Bayer seed treat-er (top right) prior to final installation. (lower right) The new conditioning facility nearing completion, October 2012. (Popp Engineering photos)



“We have made a commitment to the future, to our customers, and to helping them realize the full potential of our seed products.”

Joe Funk, editor