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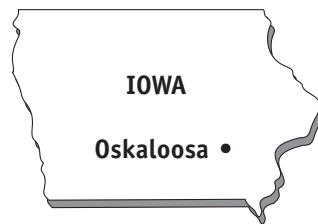
Packaging line's flexibility accomodates individual customer requests

Pierson Seed Producers, Inc.

Oskaloosa, IA

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www.rainbowseeds.com



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Oskaloosa •

Company Personnel

- Scott Pierson, Owner/General Manager
- Brent Pierson, Owner/Production Manager

Company Highlights

- Family-owned seed company established 1904.
- Rainbow brand corn and soybeans.
- Contract corn and soybean seed production, conditioning, and packaging.

Suppliers List

Project Designer/Builder Bratney Company
 Equipment installation... Pierson Seed
 Bag filler Fischbein-Inglett
 Bag printer Marsh Videojet
 Bag tagger CMSI Technologies
 Robotic Palletizer Columbia/Okura

When Scott and Brent Pierson, owners of Pierson Seed Producers, Inc., set out in 2002 to order equipment for a new seed packaging line for their corn and soybean seed processing facility, they had a clear idea of what they wanted.

All they needed was an automated bag hanger, bag filler, bag closer, tag printer/insertor, bag stitcher and a palletizer that could accommodate anything vaguely resembling a 50-pound multi-wall paper seed bag.

Plus, there was one more requirement: all the new equipment had to fit in a space no more than ten feet wide and 35 feet long.

"As a contract conditioner and packager, we never know from one day to the next what kind of seed or type of paper bag our customers will present

to us," says Scott. "Our goal is to have the equipment that will enable us to do whatever they request. Their needs, not our equipment, should be the limiting factor."

Prior to 2003, Pierson Seed had a workable but well-worn packing line. It was labor intensive with few automated features. Nonetheless, it has some advantages. Changing pallet stack patterns, for example, was a simple matter of providing new instructions to the two-man palletizing crew.

"As we looked at automated



Scott (left) and Brent Pierson.



(left) Scott Pierson displays the electrical connections and computers that operate the Columbia/Okura robotic palletizer. (right) Brent Pierson at the Fishbein BagPro bagger control panel.

palletizers, we looked for a machine that could handle all our customers' different sack sizes and stack patterns as easily as our two stackers," says Co-Owner Scott Pierson. "We also needed a bag tagger to be as adaptable as our older manual system.

"Every customer we serve seems to have their own idea of how tags are to be placed on the bags. Finding that amount of flexibility in an automated system was a challenge," says Pierson.

Finding a system to fit into Pierson Seed's limited space was also a challenge. In order to stay clear of doorways and other existing equipment, the entire packaging line could be no more than 10 feet wide and 35 feet long.

The space limitations was uncompromising. To avoid significant building remodeling costs, the packaging line had to be close to the existing clean seed storage bins. A portion of the available floor space had to be kept clear so as not to impede rebagging.

The only available space was in a corner between the warehouse door and the outside wall. When the project manager from Bratney Companies first inspected the available space, his immediate comment was, loosely translated, "No way!"

By carefully selecting equipment with a narrow profile, the new system was installed entirely inbound, albeit with a few compromises. Access to some of the bag filler's controls is via a new opening in the wall accessible only from the tower's electrical room.

Flexibility Throughout

At the front of Pierson Seed's packaging line is an Ingett® 3560 Bag Pro™ Bag Handling System. Palletizing is by a Columbia/Okura Model A1600 robotic palletizer. Additional equipment includes a Marsh Encore™ Series printer and a CMSI Tagmaster 2000 tagger.

The new line can process about 18 bags per minute. Throughout the new line, flexibility to adapt to customer requirements is evident. Paper bags, for example, are provided by a variety of vendors in a variety of sizes.

"As long as the new bags are properly packed, the Pro Bag can handle them," Pierson says. "We only encounter problems when bags are folded or crunched by the bag manufacturer."

Every seed company has its own format for printing tags. The CMSI Tagmaster can print and place tags in virtually any size and position.

The robotic palletizer is "amazing" Pierson says. It can be programmed for any pallet configuration: five or six bag patterns, with or without tie layers, labels in or out.

"We feel that we have improved our efficiency

and reduced our labor requirements," Pierson says. "We have also improved the final appearance of the package we deliver to our customer."

Joe W. Funk, editor.

For more information:

Bratney Companies, Des Moines, IA (800-247-6755/www.bratney.com).

CMSI Technologies, Maple Grove, MN (888-577-0141/www.cmsitechnologies.com).

Columbia/Okura, Vancouver, WA (360-735-1952/www.columbiaokura.com).

Fishbein, Statesville, NC (704) 871-1159/www.fischbein.com).

Videojet, Wood Dale, IL (630-860-1073/www.videojet.com).



Columbia/Okura A1600 palletizer. (Joe Funk photos)