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New ADM wheat mill to produce 3 million pounds of flour daily

**BY DANIEL GRANT**

The opening of a new Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) wheat mill in LaSalle County last month basically makes Mendota the new wheat capital of northern Illinois.

The 30,000 hundredweight mill, about double the size of ADM’s existing facility in downtown Chicago, can produce 3 million pounds of flour daily.

In fact, the state-of-the-art facility represents the largest flour mill ever built from the ground up in North America, according to ADM. The company broke ground at the site in June 2017 and started milling wheat there in early August.

“We’re so excited about our investment in this community,” Kevin Like, president of ADM Milling, said during an open house at the facility last week. “It was clear to keep growing in this area we need a state-of-the-art plant to evolve to meet customers’ needs.”

ADM built the mill in Mendota due to its proximity to major flour markets in Chicago, northwest Indiana, northeast Iowa and southern Wisconsin. The company also operates a grain elevator there.

“Here in Mendota, we started operating in 2007 and now we’ve added a wheat processing mill to the same site,” James Harper, plant manager of the Mendota mill and Illinois Wheat Association Board member, told **FarmWeek**. “We built a grain elevator that can store over 2 million bushels of wheat.

“Access to infrastructure is also important here near Interstates 39, 80 and 88,” he noted. “On the trucking side, that’s very beneficial for us.”

The facility has three bulk truck loadouts, rail loadout capability and a loop track with 110-car rail unloading capacity. It mills various types of wheat including spring, winter and soft wheat varieties along with two types of whole wheat.

Known as a destination mill, hard wheat (from states such as Kansas and Nebraska) and spring wheat (from the Dakotas and Minnesota) will be shipped via rail for processing in Mendota.

“Soft winter wheat will be the local draw (and will be shipped via trucks),” Like said. “Our hope is to increase the amount of wheat acres in this area.”

Wheat isn’t a major crop in much of northern Illinois compared to corn and soybeans. But some specialty crop acres likely will be available in the near future as Del Monte plans to close its vegetable packing facility in Mendota, constructed in 1949, by next year.

“There should be opportunities to increase (wheat) acres right here in this area,” Harper said.

Illinois Ag Director John Sullivan believes the new mill will benefit crop and livestock farmers in the state.

“It’s a tremendous opportunity to add value to our commodities,” Sullivan said at the open house.

About three-quarters of the wheat processed at the new mill goes to flour. Most of the rest of the product (about 20 truckloads per day) comes out as mill feed for livestock.

ADM incorporates radio frequency identification technology at the mill to track all inbound grain and outbound flour shipments and uses a high-speed packer. The facility also contains a 30,000 square-foot warehouse. END