

## Farm Country Co-op – Pine Island, MN (1896 – 2009)

Farm Country Co-op, formerly known as the Pine Island Farmers Elevator Company, was formed in March 1886. Their services at that time included the operation of a grain elevator; an office which sold twine manufactured by the MN State Prison in Stillwater; coal; animal feed; farm supplies; and salt that was used for livestock, cheese-making, use in feed & curing hay. The feed mill (and additional storage bins) was built in 1938 & increased the elevator's business from a range of 4 miles to approximately 35 miles in 1996.



The Elevator sustained a major blow on the evening of April 21, 1961. Described by the Pine Island Record as, "A spectacular fire that could be seen for miles..." the fire destroyed the bulk feed annex, feed mill, 2 bulk feed mixing trucks, three mixers, the electrician's mill & a hammermill. Three community fire departments fought the blaze. It took a week before clean-up of the elevator could begin.

The Elevator rebuilt the mill with additional storage and dryers the same year.

In 1970, the Pine Island Farmers Elevator Company began selling fertilizer. They expanded the fertilizer plant in 1977 to include an electrically controlled blending tower. Applicators & spreading service became available for anhydrous & dry fertilizer.

By 1986, the Elevator opened a new branch in Plainview, MN, and in the fall of the same year they added three 95,000 bushel grain bins in Pine Island.

Changes occurred in the structure of the business in the year 2000. Farm Country Co-op was formed by the merger of the Pine Island Farmers Elevator & Farmers Co-op Oil of Wanamingo. The merger gave the business a total of 4 locations: Pine Island, Wanamingo, Plainview & Cannon Falls. Products & services now include grain, feed, agronomy, petroleum, and the Delaval Dairy Division.

Noel Frana was hired as General Manager on January 1, 2002.

Farm Country Co-op has a nine member board of directors & elected the first woman in their history to the Co-op board in 2006.

Farm Country Co-op has undergone plenty of changes in its short history as well. The acquisition of a petroleum jobber ship, an independent propane dealership & a transportation division for fuels and propane have increased the sales & profits for the business. In 2004, they formed an agronomy LLC with two partners that operates as Kenyon Ag Services. 2008 brought another new entity into the picture – Pro Feeds, LLC – a joint venture between Farm Country Co-op & Greenway Co-op Services of Rochester. This full service feed operation with milling



services is based in Pine Island. A new dry fertilizer facility at the Wanamingo location was also brought online in 2008 with a storage capacity of 12,000 tons. Finally, with a complete renovation of the grain facilities for the purpose of segregation of specialty grains, Farm County Co-op received Vistive Soybeans for the first time in the fall of 2008.