

AgMark expedites operations at grain terminal with reliable control system by Kasa Industrial Controls

Formed by four US cooperatives in 1999, AgMark LLC provides warehousing and marketing services for North Central Kansas grain producers. At their grain terminal in Concordia, Kansas, AgMark receives crops from nearly 30 elevators throughout the region.



"Farmers send their grain via truck to our terminal for shipment," said Derek Sandmann, operations manager at AgMark.

"We pull orders from this pool of grain and we use shuttle trains to ship it out to buyers. It's more efficient for grain producers to bring their bushels to a single location. Plus, it allows us to secure better prices for the grain."

Only a select variety of buyers can accept grain bushels via shuttle train.

Those who can, however, prove to be a valuable asset for AgMark

and regional farmers alike. Their large selection of product ensures AgMark can easily fulfill large orders and those requiring specific ingredient blends. The shuttle train delivers grain at an expedited rate and AgMark receives benefits from railroad associations for using this shipping method. The company then redistributes the profits to the grain producers through the three cooperatives that own AgMark LLC.

Along with experiencing increased business in recent years, AgMark now handles soybeans and corn in addition to traditional wheat and milo.

Each truck must be efficiently unloaded and segregated based upon crop type.

To keep pace with busy operations, in 2006 AgMark decided to expand their facility by adding two steel storage bins and a third receiving pit. This expansion also included an equipment upgrade to better automate their operations. Now, the company's automated operations are handled by a new control system designed by Kasa Industrial Controls, based in Salina, Kansas.

"The control system we created had to handle each of these individual incoming and outgoing areas. It also would be in charge

of aeration and conveyors for relocating and storing grain," said Heath Roker, sales engineering at Kasa Industrial Controls.

"This new system improved the facility's automated processes. It also ensured their operations could be efficiently and safely controlled—and shut down, if needed."

Kasa's control system allows AgMark to run the facility with a limited number of personnel. It also accommodates multiple processes at once. Personnel can load a railcar in one location and unload grain at a truck pit elsewhere simultaneously.

"We selected user-friendly, yet powerful equipment that allows AgMark to maintain and control their system optimally," Roker said.

"We can't afford any downtime—my business doesn't run if their system doesn't work," Sandmann added.

"Using Kasa's control system, we've had fewer breakdowns and no downtime, so we can keep trucks moving through at peak times."

Kasa's system was designed to run independent of other systems in the elevator. With this arrangement, if one piece of equipment must be serviced, the rest can remain in use. Everyday operations were made simpler due to Kasa's customized control system.

"This made it easier for new operators to learn the system and suited our operations, tailored to accommodate the parameters we use when we receive trucks or load rail cars," Sandmann said.

Another benefit of this system is the technical support Kasa Industrial Controls provides. Sandmann noted that if equipment must be serviced or parameters must be changed, the company is quick to accommodate.

"With our previous automated solution provider, we had trouble with their customer service. They were based in the Northeast United States, so it was difficult to schedule an onsite visit. Phone support also often wasn't sufficient," Sandmann explained.

"Kasa has been very flexible and versatile, quickly reprogramming the system when our needs change. Most reprogramming can be accomplished via phone or Internet—but if an onsite visit is required, they're very responsive."

AgMark continues to experience an increase in truck traffic and bushels each year. The reliable solution Kasa Industrial Controls provided ensures the company can keep up with these demands.

MORE INFORMATION:

Website: www.kasaindustrialcontrols.com
AgMark: www.agmarkllc.com