

Kilic Engineering grain reclaimer hits international market



KE Agri International (KE), Kilic Engineering's international brand, has been working closely with many of the larger grain handling companies across the United States to demonstrate its KE BunkerSweeper product, a machine specifically designed for the reclaim of agricultural products from open grain piles, bunkers and horizontal buildings or sheds, writes John Warda, KE Agri International.

KE has been supplying bulk handling equipment for grain handlers in Australia, Asia and the Middle East for over 50 years, servicing the agricultural industry with fixed and portable machinery over that period. Open stockpile storage facilities (grain piles or bunker storages) are prevalent in many grain producing countries, and KE has been concentrating on supplying its customers with improved solutions for these open bulk storage types with its specialized bunker inloading and reclaimer machines.

The BunkerSweeper is designed to make reclaiming grain from temporary storage, grain piles or sheds, directly into road trucks quick and easy, reducing operating costs for grain distributors and handlers, with its superior safety features

and remote-control operation making it one of the safest methods to move agricultural produce from a grain pile to a truck.

The new model reclaimer is self-propelled (using hydraulic drives) which meets the needs of operators seeking an alternative to using front-end or payloaders or other less efficient mobile plant to recover products from open stacks and piles or from shed storages. The machine is compact and can be easily driven onto and off a flat-top trailer and transported from site to site as a standard semi-trailer load in most jurisdictions.

Since 2024, KE has been trialling its BunkerSweeper reclaimer at storage and handling operations across the mid-west of the USA.

Demonstrations of the BunkerSweeper reclaimer were undertaken in late 2024 and then again in February and March 2025 at over ten locations across Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. Storages including horizontal buildings, round centre piles, various rectangular grain piles as well as basic unprepared base ground piles were all used in the US trials undertaken.

The demos went extremely well, with

customers impressed with the Sweeper's versatility, speed of outloading and remote-control operation, amongst other features.

US companies involved in the demonstrations included ADM, CHS, Cargill, Viterra, Scoular, CVA, AgState, Aurora Co-op, Ag Partners Co-op and Southeast Farmers Co-op.

In the demonstrations completed to date, customers have noted that the BunkerSweeper's flexibility to load at angles provides significant operational benefits when emptying product from round centre pile stacks.

Its ability to handle all grain product types included wheat, sorghum, soybean, oilseeds and also wet and clumpy corn was a feature of the machine which impressed many of the customers observing the machine for the first time.

Also during these demos, KE was also able to compete head-to-head with payloaders typically used for reclaiming from grain piles and was able to outperform the outloading operation currently in use by the customer.

This proven performance advantage combined with real dollar fuel and maintenance savings delivers a comparative

financial advantage over a front-end loader as well. This was proven in the USA working alongside current reclaiming techniques employed by grain handlers, demonstrating increased productivity (i.e. outloading rates) reducing reclaiming hours, and hence overall labour and operating costs.

Lower fuel usage and reduced maintenance costs compared to payloaders, safer operations with the operator using a remote-control unit away from moving plant and the stockpile, and the ease of transferring equipment between sites were all other benefits which KE believes will see the BunkerSweeper become a key part of US grain handling operations into the future.

Nevertheless, KE has continued to improve the machine, upgrading its current reclaimer which was used in the USA demonstrations with a newer version of the machine, branded the BunkerSweeper750. This latest model will have an increased loading capacity of 20% above the current machine. This enhancement will ensure that the KE machine can significantly outperform the current payloaders and other reclaimers observed operating in US grain piles, lifting the outloading rate from 600tph (metric

tonnes per hour) to 750tph, or 28,000 bushels per hour capacity.

Furthermore and in response to US customer feedback, KE is also increasing the driving speed of the machine as well as adding all terrain tires to assist movement on less developed grain pile base surfaces. A longer throwing spout on the outload swing conveyor to improve loading to the longest road trailers in use for reclaiming, is also featured on the new model.

Finally, in the development of the BunkerSweeper, KE has been focused on automation aspects of the machine with a goal to potentially have them operating autonomously in the longer term.

Although the initial reclaimers will be constructed in KE's Australian workshops, plans are in place to have the BunkerSweeper750 reclaimer made by a partner engineering company in the USA under licence.

