

Aerobelt maintains presence in grain

Like lots of suppliers, air supported conveyor specialist Aerobelt has seen its resources sector business take off in recent years. However, unlike others, Aerobelt is maintaining brisk business with the Australian grains sector.

Over the last 15 years, 35% of Aerobelt's 270 conveyor installations have been in the grain and rice sector.

Using Aerobelt, the belt is carried on a film of air. Air is blown into the air box or plenum under the conveyor belt by a small fan. One fan is sufficient for over two hundred metres of belt conveyor.

Aerobelt puts its success down to, at least in part, the inherent advantages such a system offers over conventional belt conveying systems.

The company's conveyors are designed to operate with low friction. They are constructed with lighter and simpler components than traditional systems, reduce power consumption and the need for walkways, improve operator safety and reduce noise and dust emissions.

Aerobelt Australia's general manager, Steve Kutassy, said Aerobelt's "modular construction allows prebuilt conveyor sections to be quickly assembled on site. Conveyors can also be delivered on Aerobelt designed and supplied support steelwork, which bolt together to allow the conveyor to be transported as a single item."

Conveyor widths can range from 300mm to over 1.8m and from a few metres in length to several hundred, in single or multi-stage configurations. Tonnage rates vary from a few tonnes an hour up to 2,000 tph.

With other air supported systems occasionally cropping up in Australia, Aerobelt Australia is keen to emphasise its links to the technology's developer. It says it worked closely with Sluis, the Aer-

obelt original equipment manufacturer (OEM) in Europe, and maintains a working link with Air Conveyors International which continues to develop the Aerobelt product.

Locally, Aerobelt Australia has several grain contracts of note. It has a longstanding relationship with Cooperative Bulk Handling (CBH), established when it supplied a 180m reversible conveyor.

The 24m high conveyor links CBH's site with Joe White Maltings' facilities in Perth. Barley is conveyed at 300-330tph from CBH into a malt plant and stored in receiving vessels. After the grain has been processed into malt, it is fed back to CBH at 150tph into storage vessels.

In 2004, CBH commissioned a second 300tph conveyor system, to facilitate Joe





Joe White Maltings facility in Perth, with Aerobelt's conveyors shown before and after covers were fitted.

White Maltings' plans to double its plant capacity.

According to Kutassy, Aerobelt more recently won another contract from Joe White Maltings (now part of Viterra), on the back of its work for CBH.

The company has delivered 12 conveyors with up to 180tph capacity to the Joe White Malting facility in Minto, where construction is ongoing. The Aerobelt conveyors will be commissioned in mid-2012.

The company has also installed seven conveyors for Australian Bulk Alliance's

Appleton Dock facility in Melbourne, where conveyor capacities range from 300tph to 1,500 tph, carrying all types of grain.

Aerobelt has a range of other installations for companies in Australia, which it says will be commissioned in the next few months.

In the sugar industry, it installed 10 stainless steel conveyors, with up to 75tph capacity, for Sugar Australia's Yarville refinery in Melbourne. Also, Bundaberg Sugar has an 1800mm wide Aero-

belt conveyor carrying sugar cane at up to 400tph.

In the minerals sector, Worsley Alumina's facility at Collie in Western Australia has received three conveyors to move 600tph of alumina at temperatures up to 200°C and four more alumina conveyors with tonnages at 200tph.

Rio Tinto added two 400mm wide dust collection conveyors to the 12 already installed at Cape Lambert, as well as five for iron ore sampling. ■

Contact: www.aerobelt.com.au