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Hansen-Mueller Leaves Farms in Limbo

Harvest Payday Turns to Heartbreak: Hansen-Mueller Leaves Farmers Waiting

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By Todd Neeley, DTN Environmental Editor

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Alabama farmer Brad Ward is owed \$250,000 for delivering 48,000 bushels of corn to Hansen-Mueller Co. (Photo courtesy of Brad Ward)

LINCOLN, Neb. (DTN) -- It was ideal corn-growing weather for Atmore, Alabama, farmer Brad Ward this season.

In fact, the third-generation producer who lives about one mile north of Pensacola, Florida, has been banking on his corn crop to bring a little cash flow at a time in the season when it's needed.

Since early August, Ward said he has been delivering corn for his merchandiser at Hansen-Mueller Co. and was too busy to think much about getting paid.

When he did decide it was time to cash in on the deliveries that totaled about 48,000 bushels, his merchandiser told him he'd have to wait for the \$250,000 he's owed.

"I've just been busy and I hadn't had a chance to really follow up like I needed to," Ward told DTN.

"Didn't realize there was a problem. First chance of rain I got several weeks ago I told her, I said, 'We need to catch up on all these tickets so I can get paid, you know?' And we got busy again because we've got peanuts, and we've got cotton, and we've got corn and so we're just all in the middle of harvest and we hadn't had any rain. So, we've just kind of been wide open, drug around, drug around and a couple of weeks later, still hadn't gotten anything. So, I called her again. I said, 'Look, I said, 'We've been dragging this up.' I say, 'I need to get this money in.'"

Ward operates a 5,000-acre farm where he planted 2,000 acres each of cotton and peanuts and about 800 acres of corn -- going a little heavier on the corn than he usually would.

Not only are cotton prices around 60 to 65 cents but with the ongoing U.S. government shutdown, Ward said he's not being paid his loan money through the USDA peanut program.

"We had a phenomenal corn crop this year," Ward told DTN.

"All of our crops have been really good. We got really dry here in the fall and late summer, but we had enough rain early on. We had a phenomenal corn crop, bumper corn crop, and the cotton crop has been wonderful. The peanut crop hurt some, but just because of the light dry weather, we really needed some more rain to finish up the peanut crop, but it was enough to take care of the cotton and corn. So, we've been fortunate to at least make a good crop, but even with cotton prices like they are, it's not going to cover. It takes 85 cents really to break even on cotton, and it's sitting at 65. So, you're looking at a 20-cent loss, which is \$200 an acre loss on cotton."

Hansen-Mueller Co. has operations in 11 states including Alabama, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Texas, Ohio, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin and Louisiana.

At the end of last week, the Nebraska Public Service Commission suspended Hansen-Mueller's grain dealers license in the state after 38 farmers reported they had not been paid for grain totaling about \$2 million.

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DTN's repeated attempts to reach Hansen-Mueller officials for comment have been unsuccessful.

WARD REPORTS NONPAYMENT

Ward said he reported the nonpayment to the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries this week and contacted his commissioner in Escambia County, who had heard from other farmers.

Alabama's state department of agriculture has not responded to DTN's request for more information.

Ward then reached back out to the Hansen-Mueller merchandiser.

"She says that they have said that they're going to start back with the first tickets that they've got and start paying," Ward said.

"I think this started about the first of August when they quit paying. And so, she told me that they're supposed to start at that point and go back to start paying. And how far that will go, I don't know. And I didn't get a date. She can't give me a date."

Ward said he still has about 100,000 bushels of corn in storage and has sold more to other buyers but contracted the first 50,000 bushels to Hansen-Mueller.

In addition, Ward said he'll be delivering corn in December and January to Amick Farms, a chicken company based in Batesburg, South Carolina.

Ward's last delivery for Hansen-Mueller was on Sept. 10, he said, although his contract did not include a set date for payment. Ward said if Hansen-Mueller files for bankruptcy he's concerned about what that will mean.

"Usually when you send them an invoice, or your bill of lading, if you've got a contract, they send out a check," Ward said.

"I didn't think much about it. I just thought, you know, she was going to wait till we got the contract filled and pay it one time. So that just scares me to death. If they file, will I ever get paid? And \$250,000 is a lot of money on a farm my size."

KANSAS PRODUCER UNPAID

Yates Center, Kansas, farmer Rod Grisier caught the attention of farmers and others on social media this week when he posted to X: "Hansen Mueller is into me for three loads of wheat. What are the chances I'll ever see the money?"

Unlike Ward, Grisier told DTN he feels fortunate to have been paid by Hansen-Mueller for about 30 loads of wheat he delivered in the past month to the company's Kansas City, Missouri, elevator. The company still owes him \$15,000 for three loads.

"So, I called up there yesterday and said, 'Hey, what can I expect?' in terms of payment," Grisier said.

The person answering the phone told Grisier that Hansen-Mueller didn't have a timetable for when he might be paid.

So far, the Omaha-based Hansen-Mueller has not filed for bankruptcy in the state. In addition, DTN's search of court records in states where the company operates have turned up with no cases filed against the company.

"It's not a big thing," Grisier told DTN.

"Like I said, we had got paid on about 30,000 bushel earlier. So, I felt, you know, just kind of like, kind of like took a deep breath and like, woo."

Based on DTN's reporting, there are reports of nonpayment also in Texas and Louisiana.

For more information on state grain dealer regulations go here: [https://nationalaglawcenter.org/...](https://nationalaglawcenter.org/) and [https://aglaw.psu.edu/...](https://aglaw.psu.edu/)

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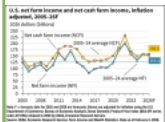
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