By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

For the fiscal year ending Jan. 31, 2012, Frenchman Valley Coop set new records for sales, local savings, patronage refunds from other coops and for overall net savings.

FVC General Manager Jim Chism made the announcement during the coop's annual meeting In Imperial Aug. 25.

That allowed the coop to distribute $3.13 million to its members in the form of cash patronage, estate payoffs and account retirements.

The entire cash patronage refund to members totalled $4,000,918, with half being paid in "qualified" cash dividends and the other half allocated to members as "non-qualified" patronage.

By using qualified and non-qualified dividends, patrons owe taxes on the qualified portion only. The tax on the non-qualified dividend was paid by the coop.

That means more money up front for the members, Chism noted.

The coop retired estate equities totalling $129,562 and another $1,000,761 to redeem the equity of retired members to bring the cash distribution to the $3.13 million mark.

Chism said the coop recorded its highest sales figure ever of $704,239,259.

The coop also produced record local savings of $10.297 million. With record patronage refunds received for doing business with other coops of $3.5 million, FVC generated a record $12.634 million in net savings, after paying $1.17 million in income taxes.

Last year's record numbers came in a year with strong commodity prices and good crop yields. Grain sales represents nearly 73 percent of the sales for the coop.

Fertilizer and agronomy services represent 11.3 percent of sales, petroleum 10.1 percent and feed 5.86 percent.

Looking forward to the current fiscal year, he said even higher commodity prices have reduced their margins. In addition, the effect of drought will be felt this year, especially with the loss of much of the dryland corn crop to the heat.

Celebrating 100 Years of Coops

The coop celebrated 100 years of coops in Chase County during their annual meeting.

Frenchman Valley Farmers Cooperative started in 1912 as a grain cooperative under the name Farmers Equity Union.

The name was later changed to Imperial Equity Exchange.

In 1927, Imperial Co-op Oil was organized.

In 1968, both coops merged and officially became known at Frenchman Valley Farmers Cooperative, Inc.

Today, FVC's service area now stretches from eastern Wyoming on the west to McCook on the east.

The United Nations declared 2012 the International Year of the Cooperatives, recognizing their impact worldwide.

As part of the recognition, FVC's primary lender, Co-Bank, matched local contributions on a $1-for-$1 match up to $5,000 for any charitable organization.

Chism said they chose the Nebraska FFA Foundation for the recipient of the $10,000 gift because of the strong role FFA plays in the development of ag leaders.

Eighty percent of the money will be earmarked for use by the FFA chapters in FVC's trade area. Schools with chapters include Imperial, Wauneta-Palisade, Perkins County, McCook,

Creek Valley (Chappell-Lodgepole), Dundy County-Stratton, Kimball and South Platte (Big Springs-Brule)

In board elections, all incumbents ran unopposed. They included Dude Tines, Venango; Steve Leibbrandt, Enders; Jay Geu, Sidney; and Dale Dueland, McCook.

The board is comprised of three panhandle seats and eight southwest seats.

Jim Haarberg of Imperial serves as president, Dueland as vice-president and Max Kaiser of Imperial as secretary.

During the meeting, FVC recognized Gene Haarberg for 12 years of service to the board. Ricky Taylor of Enders was recognized for completing board of directors certification training.

Olympic gold medal bobsledder Curt Tomasevicz of Shelby was the featured speaker for the evening.