With 27 years of experience in area cooperatives under his belt, Rick Unrein began his President/CEO duties on Monday, July 1 at Grainland Cooperative.

Unrein got his start at the Farmers Co-op Elevator in Fleming in 1982 and in 1985 took over as general manager. He remained in that position until 1997.

When Fleming and Haxtun cooperative associations merged to form the original Grainland, Unrein served as manager until 2007.

He was named Chief Operations Officer when Grainland, Holyoke and Amherst merged to form the new Grainland Cooperative in 2007.

Unrein was appointed for the CEO position by the board and is very excited about the new opportunity of helping move the company forward and continuing to serve the community.

“I just wanted to live here,” Unrein said. “I wanted to be around this area, I like the area. I like the people around here.”

Unrein said he really enjoys working for the farming community.

“They’re (the farmers) the best in the world at what they do,” he said. “It’s always a challenge and exciting to work with farmers.”

Keeping the company going is a goal for Unrein.

“Our goal is to stay competitive and stay a viable part of our community,” Unrein said. “We want to remain profitable for our stock holders.”

With so many locations spread out, Unrein said he will be in the Holyoke office the majority of the time.

Grainland Cooperative employs 110 people and Unrein said he is excited to work with all of them.

“I’m really blessed to be able to work with the employees we have in all of the locations,” Unrein said. “I look forward to working with them at this level.”

Unrein steps in as CEO following the retirement of Harlan Stern. Stern retired at the end of June after serving in Holyoke since 1978. He and his wife Mona plan to stay in the Holyoke area.

Born and raised in Fleming, Unrein has been in the area ever since. His wife Diane has been with First National Bank in Fleming for 27 years. Their daughter Nicole is an investment banker in Littleton and son Clayton works at Barnes Pharmacy in Sterling.

Unrein is a past president of the Colorado Grain and Feed and currently serves as vice president of Rocky Mountain Milling in Platteville, president of Hyline Marketing LLC and president of Whyhap Properties. All of these organizations are affiliated with Grainland.

He also chairs the workers compensation safety committee for the state of Colorado on the agribusiness side. He also serves as the chamber of commerce president in Haxtun. For 20 years Unrein served as a volunteer fireman in Fleming.

In his free time, he enjoys watching football, playing golf and caring for his yard and home in Fleming.