

Ardent Mills moves to cement its place in specialty grains with Stone Mill acquisition

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In a strategic move that underscores the growing mainstream momentum of alternative grains and gluten-free nutrition, Ardent Mills announced on July 31 that it has entered into an agreement to acquire Stone Mill, a North Dakota-based specialty grain cleaning facility. The acquisition marks a calculated expansion of Ardent Mills's Emerging Nutrition portfolio—an increasingly important arm of the company's growth strategy as consumer tastes shift decisively toward health-forward, allergen-friendly, and identity-preserved food options.

Located in Richardton, Stone Mill has long been a trusted partner to Ardent Mills, offering capabilities that go well beyond basic grain cleaning. The facility specializes in certified gluten-free and identity-preserved grains, pulses, and seeds, and brings with it valuable expertise in microbial reduction and food safety compliance—capabilities that are vital in today's quality- and traceability-driven food landscape.

"The addition of Stone Mill reflects our commitment to strategic growth and innovation," said Sheryl Wallace, CEO of Ardent Mills. "It's a strong cultural and operational fit rooted in shared purpose, values, and a clear vision for nourishing what's next."

This acquisition is as much about supply chain control as it is about customer proximity. Situated in the grain belt of North Dakota, the Richardton location gives Ardent Mills better geographic reach and logistics leverage at a time when agricultural volatility, climate risks, and consumer demands are forcing food companies to rethink operational resilience from soil to shelf.

For Ardent Mills, the move helps deepen its foothold in the "better-for-you" segment, allowing its customers—ranging from natural food startups to major CPGs—to scale product development around gluten-free, ancient grains, pulses, and plant-based formulations. As food manufacturers race to meet rising expectations on nutrition, sustainability, and clean label authenticity, having an ingredient supplier with both infrastructure and integrity has become a non-negotiable.

For Daneen Dressler, managing partner of Stone Mill, the decision to join forces was about long-term legacy and alignment. “Over the years, Stone Mill has built a strong foundation rooted in innovation, integrity, and exceptional product quality,” she said. “As we looked to the future, it was important to find a partner who shares that commitment.”

That sentiment was echoed by Kurt Long, Ardent Mills’ Vice President of Emerging Nutrition, who framed the deal as a growth accelerator not only for Ardent but for its customers. “Today’s consumers are choosing a healthier lifestyle without wanting to compromise on their eating experience,” Long said. “By expanding our capabilities and deepening our control of the supply chain, we’ll be better positioned to be the supplier-partner of choice.”

Ardent Mills has been building toward this moment. Over the past few years, the Denver-based milling and ingredients giant has gradually diversified its wheat-dominant portfolio with strategic investments in quinoa, chickpeas, buckwheat, millet, sorghum, and pulse flours—ingredients now powering some of the most dynamic growth categories in snacks, bakery, and plant-based foods.

By bringing Stone Mill into its ecosystem, Ardent not only gains critical processing know-how and gluten-free validation capacity, but also secures a more integrated pipeline for accelerated innovation and faster speed to market. With nutrition-forward food product cycles now compressing and clean-label requirements intensifying, vertical capability is increasingly a competitive edge.

The acquisition also reflects the broader structural trend of “nutrition convergence” in the agri-food sector: consumers are no longer separating indulgence from wellness, or functionality from flavor. As the center of the supermarket shifts from shelf-stable commodities to ingredient-driven storytelling, companies like Ardent Mills are positioning themselves as full-stack partners—helping brands win both in the lab and on the label.

The deal is subject to customary closing conditions, but once completed, it promises to further solidify Ardent Mills’ transformation from a traditional flour miller into a modern-day ingredient solutions powerhouse. In the race to meet the evolving needs of tomorrow’s health-conscious consumer, Stone Mill may well prove to be one of the most quietly transformative additions to Ardent’s portfolio yet.

In a food system increasingly shaped by precision, preference, and provenance, cleaning grain is no longer just about purity—it’s about potential.