



# Alumni Spotlight

## Eliana Cobos

MAB Class of 2003  
International Sales Manager  
The Exotic Blends Company  
Quito, Ecuador



by Mark Seitz

*The Alumni Spotlight focuses on an MAB alum and is written by Mark Seitz, a 2003 MAB graduate.*

### Eliana Cobos... One of MAB's Best Kept Secrets

As a graduate of the Master of Agribusiness program I could write numerous pages about my experiences in the MAB program: how much I learned, how challenging the program was/is and how it changed my life. I think most of us who endured our four weeks of festivities on campus and our two plus years of study while juggling work & family could do the same thing. While the pace of the program certainly caused me, and I am sure the rest of you a bit of anxiety, I believe the single greatest part of being an MAB student was having the chance to meet so many incredibly talented people. Our friends and classmates come from across the agribusiness industry, from all over the US and around the world. This incredibly diverse, business savvy group of classmates and professors make the MAB program what it is today – the best agribusiness distance education program in the world.

My classmate and friend Eliana Cobos, (Class of 2003) is a great example of the kind of agribusiness professional – both American and international, MAB attracts. Eliana, like many others in the MAB program, brought her diverse background and international experience in the food industry to Manhattan in January 2001. I recently emailed Eliana and asked her a few questions for this article. I wanted her to share with us some of her thoughts and experiences in MAB and how it changed her and her life for this month's *MAB Syllabus Alumni Spotlight*.



**Mark:** Where do you live now and where are you working?

**Eliana:** I live in Quito, Ecuador and work for The Exotic Blends Company as an international sales manager. My company is a natural gourmet snacks producer and exporter, who's most important products are banana and plantain chips. We export product to markets in the USA, France, Jamaica, Canada, Holland and Switzerland. Prior to this position I worked as an Export Manager in the Export Department for Expropalm S.A. in Quito, the second largest exporter of hearts of palm in Ecuador.



**Mark:** What is your agribusiness background? Where did you work before joining the MAB program?

**Eliana:** My father is an agronomic engineer with a Masters degree in Rural Development and my mother is a nutritionist who owns a small processing plant that produces fruit pulp that is sold in local markets. My parents own a farm in northwest Ecuador. They have owned and operated this farm for 23 years and grow tropical fruit such as sour soup, papaya and passion fruit. I grew up on this farm assisting with the harvest and processing of these products. After

college, I left the farm and took an internship with an exotic hot sauce producer – *Especies Exoticas Cia. Ltda.* This is where I realized that I enjoyed and was very good at selling food products in international markets. I spent most of my professional career working in international sales and after short stays in the cut flower industry, I took a job with *The Exotics Blends Company*.

**Mark:** What attracted you to the MAB program?

**Eliana:** What I found interesting about it was the fact of being able to attend a prestigious American university while being able to keep my job. I found about the MAB program on the Internet, on a link from the University of California, Davis.

**“What I found interesting about the MAB program was the fact of being able to attend a prestigious American university while being able to keep my job.”**

**Mark:** How do you think the MAB program helped you with your career?

**Eliana:** The MAB program helped me in two aspects. The classes, projects and exams helped me organizing my thoughts and ideas in a fashion that greatly helped my ability to manage the work I do for my company. Dr. Schurle's Computer Optimization class taught me some valuable spreadsheet applications that I use every day in my current position.

**Mark:** What did you enjoy most about the MAB program?

**Eliana:** I was able to meet people from many different backgrounds. The professors, classmates, guest speakers and administrative personnel made the program a very enriching experience. The networking opportunities were a big plus that the MAB program at K-State offered.

**Mark:** If you think about your life before the MAB program and after MAB, how have your views of the world changed?

**Eliana:** I am now able to see things not only from my point of view but also from the point of view of the person I am talking to. Dr. Barkley's International Trade Policy class helped me see things from an international perspective. This knowledge helps me understand and balance the needs of my clients and negotiate with them. Having a greater understanding of comparative advantage and how trade policy and trade barriers are implemented helps me better understand my clients needs and enables me to create situations that result in win/win situations for both parties more often.

**Mark:** What training from your MAB classes do you use most often today?

**Eliana:** Today I don't use materials from any one class more than materials from another. That to me is the beauty of the MAB program – the holistic vision of the entire industry and what it takes to be a successful manager. The whole experience provided me with the professional background I needed to cope with the challenges I face each day in my job.

**“The beauty of the MAB program is the holistic vision of the entire industry and what it takes to be a successful manager. The whole experience provided me with the professional background I needed to cope with the challenges I face each day in my job.”**

**Mark:** I know you told me many times that you had many international education opportunities before coming to Kansas State. Where did you receive your bachelor's degree and what other educational programs and opportunities did you have before landing in Manhattan, KS?

**Cobos... continued on next page**

# In the NEWS...

**Marilyn Vass**, alum, has taken an Accounts Manager position with Kearny County Hospital in Lakin, Kans. She is also responsible for web monitoring.

**Stacie Garvert**, class of 2007, has started a new position as a Futures and Options Analyst with British Petroleum in Naperville, Ill. She will be working in their Oil Americas supply and trading division.

**Marcella Warner**, class of 2008, was selected for the Phi Kappa Phi honor society.

**Scott Snider**, class of 2007, has returned to US Bank in Centerville, Iowa as a Commercial Loan Officer for the Northeast Missouri/Southern Iowa Region.

**Leslie Shuler**, class of 2009, and her fiance, Scott Svacina, announced their engagement. A wedding is planned for October 11, 2008.

**Travis Gullickson**, class of 2005, has been promoted to Regional Operations Manager - Logistics within Land O'Lakes Purina Feed. He was previously the Sr. Transportation Manager for LOL Dairy Foods.

**Sara Sellers**, class of 2007, was married to Enzo Zouaoui on April 14 in Texas. They held a second ceremony in Ouarzazate, Morocco on April 21. **Stacie Garvert**, class of 2007, was the maid of honor at both ceremonies.

**Lon Frahm**, class of 2002, has been appointed by Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius to serve as a commissioner on the Kansas Water Authority.

**Mark Winger**, alum, was promoted to Senior Vice President of Administration for Farm Credit of Western Kansas. He was elected to four-year term on the Board of Trustees for Colby Community College in April. Mark is also serving a one-year term as the chairman of the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership, Inc.

**Amy Brusik**, class of 2009, has been promoted to Grant Specialist at the K-State College of Veterinary Medicine. She will be responsible for fiscal management and proposal preparation for grant funds with Clinical Sciences.

**Clint Imel**, class of 2004, and his wife, Cheryl, announce the birth of their second son, Reece Colton. Reece joined big brother, Mason on March 30 and weighed 5 lbs., 15 oz.

**Barry Brant**, class of 2007, has accepted a Sales Manager position with Koch Nitrogen in Wichita, Kans.

**Paula Prindiville**, class of 2008, is now the Corporate Gift Shop Director for Adam's Mark Hotels in St. Louis, Mo.

**Katy Venard**, class of 2007, accepted a position with Murphy-Brown LLC in Ames, Iowa as a Feed Operations Specialist.

**Terry Garvert**, MAB Advisory Board Member, started a new job with Cargill, Inc.'s Grain and Oilseed Supply Chain-N.A. as the Corn & SBM Customer Risk Manager.

**Sandra Alton**, alum, began a new position as Member Services Representative with Gay Lea Foods, which is a milk processing cooperative in Ontario with plants in Teeswater, Guelph and Missisauga.

**Jeff Ast**, class of 2007, and his wife, Kerri, announce the birth of their son, Jeffrey Teague, on April 4. Little Teague weighed 5 lbs., 6 oz. and was 19" long.

**Nathan Broders**, class of 2006, and his fiancee, Carrie Littlewood, announced their engagement. A summer 2008 wedding is planned.

**Becky Bradwell**, class of 2009, accepted a position with TSC Container Freight as a Merchandiser Assistant I.

**Zach Gaines**, alum, has been promoted from Research Technician to Brewhouse Manager for Anheuser-Busch, Inc. and moved to Los Angeles, Calif.

**Nate Schroeder**, class of 2009, has accepted a position as District Sales Manager with Croplan Genetics, a division of Land O'Lakes in Omaha, Neb.

**Michelle (Evosovich) Adams**, alum, and her husband, Rich, announce the birth of their daughter, Kylee Marie on January 29. Kylee was 6 lbs., 3 oz. and 19" long.

**Chris Nobles**, class of 2004, is the new Farm and Laboratory Manager at the Uihlein Farm of Cornell University in Lake Placid, NY. Uihlein Farm is the official Foundation Seed Potato Farm for the state of New York.

**Marvin Knoeber**, class of 2005, has accepted a position as a Teacher with Valley High School in Gilcrest, Colo.

**Eliana Cobos**, alum, is now the International Sales Manager for The Exotic Blends Company in Quito, Ecuador.

**Ryan Dunn**, class of 2007, accepted an Operations Manager position at Grand River Bean, Inc., an edible/dry bean processing and growing facility.

**Brad Swartz**, class of 2008, is now a Grain Merchandiser for Agrex Inc. in Superior, Neb.

**Matt Craig**, class of 2005, has taken a job with Ethanex Energy as the Manager of Sales and Marketing.

## Cobos... cont'd from previous page

**Eliana:** I attended Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Quito and received a Bachelors of Arts - Foreign Languages Applied to International Business in January, 1999. I also took a one month intensive course in Italian Language and Culture in Siena, Italy in 1998. In addition I participated in the American Field Service Intercultural Exchange Program, in Newfoundland, Canada where I studied during my senior year of high school.

**Mark:** Tell us a little about the amount of travel and how many frequent flier miles you have accumulated since graduating from the MAB program?

**Eliana:** Well, I have been traveling quite a lot the last two years. On average I travel two to three times per year to Europe and the US.

My business travel has taken me to France, Sweden, Germany and several states in the US – enough frequent flier miles for a good vacation in Europe.

**Mark:** What would you say to a colleague or prospective student who is thinking about starting the MAB program?

**Eliana:** It is a very thorough academic program and I would totally recommend the experience. I would do so not only because of the academic standards adhered to by K-State in running this program, but also because of the diversity of the people and the networking opportunities the MAB program provides.

