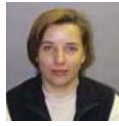




# Alumni Spotlight

## Kimberly Rameker Hurst

MAB Class of 2006  
Manager Commodity Procurement and Risk Management  
Ralcorp Holdings, Inc.  
St. Louis, Missouri



by Cristina Mansfield

*The Alumni Spotlight focuses on an MAB alum and is written by Cristina Mansfield, a 2004 graduate.*

### MAB student shares her global agribusiness experiences

Kimberly Rameker studied finance and political science at the University of Wisconsin where she was recruited by Cargill. As a Divisional Commodity Trader/Merchant for Cargill, Kim was responsible for trading corn and corn co-products into the domestic and export markets for Cargill’s North American Corn Milling Operations.

After three years with Cargill, Kim moved to Portland to become the Oregon Department of Agriculture Marketing Division’s International Trade Manager for China, where she helped promote agricultural products produced or manufactured in Oregon to the Chinese market. According to Kim, one of the most rewarding projects was working with Oregon Seed Council to evaluate the use of Oregon grasses and legumes for soil conservation in China. She traveled to China frequently and was able to use her Mandarin, Chinese skills to help negotiate contracts between Oregon grass seed growers and the Chinese government. Three applied research and demonstration trials were conducted by the Soil & Water Conservation Bureau, Changjian Water Resources Commission in YiChang County to evaluate the effectiveness of grass to prevent soil loss around China’s largest dam project, and to promote local forage and livestock systems. The site was in Shibaxi Village, Shandouping Township, Yichang County, about 40 km from the center of Yichang City, and 3 km from the dam site of the Three Gorges Project. Trials were conducted in cooperation with local bureau officials and farmers.

Kim then spent six years with the U.S. Grains Council, the international trade body that facilitates the export of corn, sorghum, barley and their co-products. As the Council’s Southeast Asia Regional Director based in Kuala Lumpur, Kim was responsible for carrying out market development

and trade activities in the region on behalf of the US feed grains export community and managing Council offices and staff in Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia. Kim and her family spent five and a half years in Kuala Lumpur after a year at the Council’s Washington, DC office, serving as Manager of International Operations/Asia.

It was while she was in Kuala Lumpur that Kim—who was also starting a family at the time—entered the MAB

**The MAB program was an ideal fit for Kim. She was looking for an international program that offered flexibility within a strong core curriculum combining agriculture and business with an on-campus component that would expose her to different agribusiness disciplines and industries through interaction with fellow classmates.**

program. Kim compared a number of programs located both within and outside of the US when she decided she wanted to pursue a graduate level degree. She says the K-State Master of Agribusiness program was an ideal fit for her. She was looking for an international program that offered flexibility within a strong core curriculum combining agriculture and business with an on-campus component that would expose her to different agribusiness disciplines and industries through interaction with fellow classmates.

The technology used by the MAB was constantly improving, which made the program even more appealing to Kim. “The hardest thing was trying to get up in the middle of the night for chat rooms!”

Kim discovered how committed the professors and coordinators of the program were to their international students when they sent Arlo Biere halfway around the world to meet her and Timothy Loh, another MAB graduate, in Singapore for their thesis defenses. From a hotel room in Singapore, they were able to link up with the rest of their thesis review panels in Manhattan, Kansas.

When her husband was recalled back to the U.S. by Boeing, Kim took six months off to get the family transitioned. In January 2009, she joined Ralcorp as a Commodity Procurement and Risk Manager within the corporate procurement division. Ralcorp produces Post branded cereals, a variety of value brand and store brand foods sold under the individual labels of various grocery, mass merchandise and drugstore retailers, and frozen bakery products sold to in-store bakeries, restaurants and other

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MAB Alumni Tim Loh and Kim Rameker with Professor Arlo Biere in Singapore 2007.

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foodservice customers. Ralcorp's diversified product mix includes a wide variety of items, such as: snack products, candy, salad dressings, mayonnaise, peanut butter, breakfast items, and frozen pre-baked dough products. Kim is responsible for purchasing all of the cocoa and soybean oil used by Ralcorp and managing the price risk associated with these two commodities.

Given the price volatility of the past 18 months, managing price risk has become increasingly important to companies.

Virtually all commodities purchased by Ralcorp have varying amounts of price volatility associated with them and fluctuating commodity prices can negatively affect Ralcorp's ability to maintain budgets, achieve margins and create bottom-line profitability. Proper risk management is essential to stabilize financials and ensure that Ralcorp is pricing its products competitively. For cocoa and soybean oil, managing price involves determining when to enter the market for spot and forward purchases, using a combination of contracts and derivatives on commodity exchanges, leveraging supplier relationships within the industry, and managing the supply chain to negotiate basis and freight rates for the various soy oil and cocoa products that Ralcorp uses in its production facilities.

Asked what lesson she has learned through her domestic and international work, Kim is ready with the response: despite advances in electronic communications and technology, personal or face-to-face interaction is still the most important factor in the failure or success of most business transactions and relationships. As technology continues to advance, it becomes easy for companies to

**What lesson has Kim learned throughout her career?**

**"Personal or face-to-face interaction is still the most important factor in the failure or success of most business transactions and relationships."**

forget the critical role that personal relationships play. From her experience, this is especially true when it comes to cross-cultural relationships and any type of international transaction. Kim says, "This becomes painfully obvious whenever a dispute arises regarding a contract, shipment or product quality complaint. I've seen disputes more easily resolved if parties on both sides of the transaction have an established relationship based on trust and confidence."

When asked what the future holds, Kim is quick to point out that right now she's just trying to juggle the daily challenge of three kids under 3 years old and a full-time job. Kim was born in the Philippines and spent the majority of her childhood and formative years living in Asia, a part of the world she and her husband would one day like to return to. "Right now we're enjoying our time in the U.S. although we'd certainly go back overseas if the right opportunity presented itself. I'd like to give my children the same exposure that my parents gave me. I want them to be able to speak a second language and appreciate how interconnected the world has become."



MAB Alum Kim Rameker Hurst and her family: Matthew, Jeff, Katie, Kim and baby William.

## Students complete thesis projects

To access an electronic version of a thesis or view a thesis defense, log onto K-State On-Line, [www.online.ksu.edu](http://www.online.ksu.edu), with your eID and password. Go to the MAB Community Page, go to Files & Content and click on Theses.

**Chad Bontrager**, Class of 2009, *Flour Moisture Control for Maximum Water Addition*

**Amy Brusk**, Class of 2009, *Survey of Business Management Factors Associated with Mixed Animal Veterinary Practice Size and Growth*

**Clair Doan**, Class of 2009, *Strategic Planning as a Differentiating Factor in Performance*

**Doug Regehr**, Class of 2009, *Real Estate Advertising in Today's Auction Industry*

**Leslie Svacina**, Class of 2009, *Preparing Industry Leaders: An Evaluation of Former AFA Participants' Workplace Skills*