



Alumni Spotlight

Juan Garza Quiroga

Class of 2010
Meat Division Sub-Director for Procurement
H-E-B Supermercados Int.
Escobedo, Nuevo Leon, Mexico

The supermarket meat industry

While growing up in Monterrey, Mexico, Juan Garza Quiroga's family raised commercial and registered cattle as a side business. They lived in the city during the week operating a variety of small shops such as grocery stores, meat markets and video rental stores, and raised cattle on weekends. Garza went to his first slaughter facility at the age of five to harvest heifers for his family's use. When he got older, Garza participated in a foreign exchange student program in southwest Minnesota to learn more about American food production practices.

Upon returning to Mexico after the exchange program, Garza decided to pursue a degree in Food Engineering at ITESM in Monterrey. Following completion of his bachelor's degree, he spent a summer at Kansas State University taking classes in meat processing and another summer working in Costa Rica at a meat plant.

"I decided to go 'all in' on the meat business," Garza said. "I took courses at K-State, worked in a processing plant and began a master's degree in Meat Science at the University of Nebraska."

After graduation from UNL, he worked as a consultant for a company that designed meat plants in Mexico

and Latin America. This position was temporary while he negotiated a Manager-in-Training of Store Operations position with H-E-B, a grocery store chain in Texas and Mexico.

H-E-B began with one store in 1905 in Kerrville, Texas. Over the last century, what started as a small, family-owned grocery shop now has more than 350 stores in 155 communities in Texas and Mexico and employs 76,000 employees. H-E-B is currently one of the nation's largest independently-owned food retailers.

After a series of promotions, he is now the Meat Division Sub-Director for Procurement. In this position, Garza is responsible for buying and coordinating meat, poultry, seafood and deli meats for H-E-B stores. He also develops their commercial strategy, plans

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marketing promotions and oversees store processes and quality control.

During the last few years, Garza and

H-E-B have had to adapt to a number of changes in the supermarket meat industry. Many of the changes have been the result of increasing beef prices due to fewer beef cattle and more export markets opening to U.S. beef causing increased demand globally.

"New prices in the industry have shifted demand for several items. We've seen a higher demand for lower cost items such as poultry products with the recent increases in beef prices. Pork prices are also higher due to a shrinking supply," he said. "We've also seen an increase in the demand for deli meats."

Garza decided to do the Master of Agribusiness program at K-State to gain a better understanding of the business side of the industry.



"I was looking for a program different than a MBA--something that would have a direct impact on the business and allow me to maintain my job while in school. I was familiar with K-State after taking summer courses there and liked the idea I could continue working," he said. "The MAB program helped me understand the globalization of agriculture, the

2008: *Mi Tienda* (My store) is named the Best Hispanic Supermarket and Houston Central Market is named the Best Grocery Store by the *Houston Press*.



economics behind this industry, and how everything is connected. The most important thing I learned is how these concepts apply to my everyday reality and how to take advantage of this knowledge. The way MAB classes are setup, you learn through everyday problems and opportunities within agribusiness. It is helpful for all jobs related to agriculture, production, marketing, logistics, transformation, sales and purchasing."

In addition to the knowledge gained

throughout the program, the thesis project gave him an opportunity to address an issue H-E-B had been facing. His MAB thesis, "*Quality Perception in a Meat Department of a Retail Store*" measured the effect of different variables on customer quality perception of the meat department, and compared results from surveys with methodology used to measure quality perception issues.

"I choose that topic because at that time it was a serious issue in the company and through my thesis investigation we were able to define some strategic actions to increase quality perception," he said.

For individuals considering the MAB or currently working on a thesis, Garza has the following advice to make the daunting project easier.

"Write your thesis on

a topic or issue that you really like and have interest in, but is also a business opportunity for you and your company. The process of writing the thesis is easier if it is a project that will generate results for your business, and you can graduate as well," he said.

For Garza, the skills learned in the MAB program and his technical background in meat science have blended well and helped him be successful at H-E-B.

2010: *Progressive Grocer* Magazine names H-E-B Retailer of the Year. This award is given on the criteria of industry contribution, industry leadership, achievements with social responsibility and sustainability, community leadership, executive stewardship and corporate culture.



MAB visits with potential students at IFT Food Expo

The Master of Agribusiness shared a booth with the K-State Food Science Institute at the Institute of Food Technology's 2014 Food Expo in New Orleans in June.

The two programs have been exhibiting together for more than 10 years at the Food Expo. Program Coordinator Deborah Kohl and Program Associate Mary Bowen visited with MAB alumni, current and potential students at the three-day expo.

If you'll be in Chicago for the 2015 IFT Food Expo July 11 - July 14, 2015 look for MAB at booth #2039

If there are tradeshows you think MAB should consider for recruiting purposes, please contact Mary at mjbowen@ksu.edu.



Mary Bowen, Deborah Kohl, Global Campus Coordinator Elissa Mullinix and Director of the Food Science Institute Dr. Curtis Kastner at the IFT Food Expo in New Orleans.



Kohl (right) answers questions about the MAB program at the IFT Food Expo.