Space still available on MAB trip to Europe

Kansas State University’s Master of Agribusiness (MAB) program is offering travel to France, Italy and Switzerland to learn about the food and agriculture industry in Europe. The trip will include stops in Lyon and Paris, France; Rome and Milan, Italy; and Lucerne, Switzerland. The tour is scheduled for August 1 – 13, 2012 and is open to anyone with an interest in international agribusiness. Nearly 20 individuals have committed to joining the group, but there is space for a few more.

Welcome to the MAB Class of 2014

Kurt Anderson
Business Analyst
John Deere Company
Moline, Illinois

David Bahre
President, CEO
Bahre Investments, Inc.
Wamego, Kansas

Jacob Bailey
Grain Procurement Merchandiser
New Horizons CHS Service Center
Herman, Minnesota

Jarah Casten
Project Manager and Developer
John Deere
Urbandale, Iowa

Emilie Gein
Commodity Merchant
Cargill, Inc.
Kansas City, Missouri

Blake Hansen
Shop and Equipment Manager
Rodney Hansen Farms, Inc.
Paul, Idaho

Michael Hauger
Technical Support Specialist
John Deere
Des Moines, Iowa

Chris Hines
Elevator Manager
Offerle Coop Grain and Supply Co.
Offerle, Kansas

Dr. Allen Featherstone
Program Director
afeather@ksu.edu

Mary Bowen
Program Associate
mjbowen@ksu.edu

Deborah Kohl
Program Coordinator
dkohl@agecon.ksu.edu

785.532.4495
mab.ksu.edu
mab@agecon.ksu.edu

Master of Agribusiness
Kansas State University
Department of Agricultural Economics
324 Waters Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506-4011

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The New Year often brings new beginnings, and for Deborah (Debore-ah) Kohl, those new beginnings include joining the MAB team at K-State. Being a Wildcat is familiar territory for Deborah, as she completed her Master of Education while serving as a graduate assistant with Housing & Dining Services at K-State, but she is looking forward to new opportunities to put on the purple and represent the MAB program globally. Her previous 10 years at K-State centered around phase one of the $104 million project at Jardine Apartments, including marketing, grant writing, communication and community development. After transitioning briefly to Baylor University, where she brought a newly-purchased apartment community online, Deborah and her family are thrilled to be back in Manhattan.

In her free time, Deborah enjoys following her children’s adventures in men’s gymnastics, wrestling, and ballet. She is also learning to ballroom dance with her husband, Ben, and looking forward to warm weather and gardening.

Welcome to Deborah Kohl

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Geremy Larson
Product Marketing Manager
John Deere Company
Lenexa, Kansas

Heather Luis
Agricultural Commodity Grader
USDA
Hastings, Nebraska

Joe Mosier
Technical Information Business Analyst
Deere & Company
Moline, Illinois

Tara Oliver
Account Representative
The Andersons Inc.
Logansport, Indiana

Juan Orozco
Technician
Murphy Brown, LLC
Yuma, Colorado

Kyle Patten
Marketing Representative
John Deere Company
Des Moines, Iowa

Nicole Peter
Contract Manufacturing Manager
Land O’Lakes Purina Feed, LLC
Shoreview, Minnesota

Lauren Robertson
Credit Analyst
John Deere Financial
Madison, Wisconsin

Magnus Rupp
Frahm Farmland Inc.
Colby, Kansas

Dan Scheetz
Wholesale Sales Representative
Helena Chemical Company
Ankeny, Iowa

Janel Schemper
Field Manager
Schemper Harvesting
Holdrege, Nebraska

Jordan Shifflett
Program Technician
USDA-Farm Service Agency
Saint Joseph, Missouri

Michelle Swartz
Account Manager
Turf Design, Inc.
Olathe, Kansas

Christy Wipperfurth
Agricultural Commodity Grader
USDA
Lodi, Wisconsin

Emerson Wohlenberg
Market Analyst
SLC Agricola S/A
Porto Alegre, Brazil

Lance Zollinger
Relationship Manager, Vice President
Northwest Farm Credit Services
Rexburg, Idaho

Welcome to the 15th MAB Cohort!
Agribusiness entrepreneur

Carlos Piana is a quintessential entrepreneur, always returning to his interest in agribusiness.

In the early 1980s, he and his father produced rice and soybeans. When he enrolled in the MAB in 1999, they were exporting mangoes from Ecuador. They contemplated constructing a processing plant for acerola, the vitamin C “super fruit,” for export to Brazil and Japan. At the time, the shrimp export industry was booming and a shrimp businessman expressed interest in financing Carlos’ acerola plant. However, a series of adverse events stopped their plans short: the shrimp monoculture was wiped out by the “mancha blanca” (white stain) viral disease, agriculture was devastated by the el Niño phenomenon of 1997-’98, and half of the banks of Ecuador failed the following year. Carlos eventually sold the factory and looked for opportunities outside the sector.

On a trip to the U.S., he bought the exclusive Ecuador franchise rights for Novus Windshield Repair and Replacement. The company franchises automated windshield repair and replacement equipment that allows franchisees to offer full windshield services (polishing, repair, and replacement). The business caught his eye because as a consumer he felt defrauded by the quality of service available in the Ecuador. After acquiring the franchise rights, he went to Chile for orientation, trained his staff, and set up shop.

The wake-up call came when Carlos realized that used car dealers – those most likely to demand his services – where not interested in investing in the more expensive protective glass used by Novus. Although Carlos also imported Allied windshields, car dealers were more likely to buy supplies on the black market in “exploding” glass that had emerged, notwithstanding the dangers this presented to drivers and passengers. Nevertheless, the Novus business was successful, and Carlos sold franchises in two cities…until he realized that at least one of the franchisees was not using the standard resin when installing windshields that gives Novus its value. He cancelled one franchise, and when a business colleague expressed interest in Novus, Carlos sold his rights and got out.

By the time he put Novus behind him in 2006, Carlos was already working for Universal Sweet Industries (USI), where he is now Head of Procurement. Entrepreneur Isabel Noboa de Loor used her inheritance from plantation baron father Luis Noboa to build an empire of her own. Today, she is President of Nobis, a consortium of companies that includes real estate, commercial, and agribusiness enterprises including USI. When one of Ecuador’s leading confectionery companies, La Universal established in 1889, went bankrupt, Nestle bought up some of the brands. But the factory where Carlos works today stood empty until USI bought the remaining assets six years after the bankruptcy.

“I am not sure why, but Nestle did not buy some of the much-loved brands and USI eventually acquired them. Today, we compete with Nestle,” he said (www.lauuniversal.com).

Carlos started at USI working in cocoa procurement. This is a complex area that requires knowledge of bean production and processing as well as familiarity with the world cocoa market and factors affecting demand, supply and prices. However, Carlos was already familiar with the industry, which proved to be useful. USI spends $6 million annually on cacao. Although USI started with multiple producers, they now have a network of three to four producers that can provide the quality, volume, and price USI needs to remain competitive.

Carlos was also responsible for exports. Since La Universal is a historic brand, many of the three million Ecuadorians living on the East Coast of the U.S.
MAB Alumnus gives back and encourages others to do the same

With a recent large gift from MAB alumnus Rich Porter, building on previous gifts from other alumni and friends, the Department of Animal Science and Industry will begin construction of the expanded K-State Livestock Marketing and Learning Center.

Porter and his wife Sarah own Porter Cattle Company in Reading, Kan. He graduated from K-State in 1972 with a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering and completed the MAB program in 2004. Porter believes the time he spent at K-State was a strong factor in his professional development and inspired him to make gifts to the university.

“While at K-State — in particular, pursuing my MAB — I became well-acquainted with a number of faculty members who helped me learn a lot about how to better run my business,” Porter said. “I wanted to do something that would make a real difference at K-State and help it better serve the faculty and students there who are doing so much good for society. I’m very passionate about helping K-State pursue its mission.”

Opportunities exist for alumni to contribute directly to the MAB program through development of funding gifts for professorships and endowments, which would allow faculty to focus solely on the MAB program, and through scholarships.

Scholarships allow us to attract students who otherwise may not be able to enter the program due to financial reasons, including individuals throughout the United States and the world. The diversity that these students bring to the program benefits all participants. There are two different scholarships that are currently offered by the program: the Alumni Agribusiness Scholarship and the Alumni Producer Scholarship, which is awarded to a student in production agriculture.

“I was one of the oldest people in the first MAB class, so I am hitting the stage of life when people are considering the best uses for the money their MAB experience allowed them to make. And KSU was at the top of my list, especially the College of Ag,” Porter said.

Please contact the MAB office if you are interested in exploring opportunities to make a huge difference for others, please call us at 785-532-4495.

Featherstone receives teaching award

by Shannon Krueger

Dr. Allen Featherstone was selected as a recipient of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Agriculture Sciences Excellence in Teaching award.

He accepted the award at the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) annual meeting in November 2011 in San Francisco.

Since joining K-State Agricultural Economics in 1986, Featherstone has taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate classes. His courses include an experiential course in conjunction with Frontier Farm Credit where the class serves as a board of directors. In addition, he teaches Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems with eight international professors to educate students on the global dimensions of agriculture. In 1998, he guided the development of K-State’s award-winning Master in Agribusiness (MAB) degree, a distance-education program for individuals whose career and family status do not allow access to a traditional on-campus degree program.

Visit MAB at AMI in Dallas

The Master of Agribusiness will have a booth for the first time at AMI International (Meat, Poultry & Seafood Industry Expo) May 1-3 at the Dallas Convention Center.

If you’re going to be at AMI, stop by and visit Allen, Deborah and Mary at booth #2030. We’d love to see you!
in food and agriculture to look at major competitors in grains, beef and dairy.

“European consumers are much more focused on local production and the connection with where, and how, their food is produced. In addition, their views on the use of biotechnology differ quite substantially than those in the U.S. and other regions. Understanding the producers’ reactions to a very different food consumer may be helpful if U.S. consumers’ attitudes toward food continue to change,” Featherstone said.

We are currently accepting at $500 per person deposit. The deposit is applied toward the total trip cost. Final payment will be due by May 18. Travelers will be able to pay the final payment by check or credit card.

Previous international trips hosted by the Master of Agribusiness program have been to South America, Russia, Southeast Asia, and Australia and New Zealand.

“We are always looking for new markets and competitors in food production,” said Featherson.

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Estimated Trip Rates:
Double Occupancy Rate: Single = $4,400* Couple = $8,800*
Single Occupancy Rate = $5,275*
*These are based on current estimates and exchange rates. Trip costs will be paid in local currencies and the final cost will depend on the number of travelers and exchange rates.

Cost Breakdown
• Registration: $4,400 covers in-country logistics, hotel/motel rooms, internal flights and most meals for double occupancy.

Additional Expenses
• International Airfare: $600 to $1,200 per person (airfare rates depend on economy). Each traveler is responsible for transportation from local origin to Rome, Italy and from Paris, France to local origin.
• Additional meals, souvenirs & personal items
• Optional trip insurance
Students complete thesis projects

To read current or previous thesis projects, go to http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/ and search by author, title or keywords (no log-in required). To read a thesis written before 2008 or view thesis defense, log onto K-State On-Line, www.online.ksu.edu, with your eID and password. Go to the MAB Community Page, go to Files & Content and click on Theses.

Josh Engelmann, class of 2011, Dairy Price Risk Management Analysis

Juan Garza, class of 2010, Quality Perception in a Meat Department of a Retail Store

Cori Wittman, class of 2011, From Rice Fields to Red Light Districts: An Economic Examination of Factors Motivating Employment in Thailand’s Sex Industry

International elective, AGEC 710, begins April 16th

The MAB’s award-winning international elective, Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems, is set to begin in mid-April and runs through mid-August.

AGEC 710 is team taught by faculty at K-State’s partner institutions in Uruguay, France, Russia, New Zealand, Uganda, India and Thailand. The course gives students a first-hand account of the history and conditions of each of the significant economic zones studied – MERCOSUR, European Union, Russia and the Former Soviet Union, Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia.

Anyone with a bachelor’s degree, two years of professional work experience and an interest in the food and agriculture sector is encouraged to enroll. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone thinking about joining the MAB program to test the distance technology and get a feel for the program.

The course is open to students in the Master of Agribusiness program, but may also be taken by individuals not currently participating in the MAB program. Anyone with a bachelor’s degree, two years of professional work experience and an interest in the food and agriculture sector is encouraged to enroll. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone thinking about joining the MAB program to test the distance technology and get a feel for the program.

Enrollment is now open for the three-credit hour course, so if you are interested in the elective, please contact Deborah or Mary at 785-532-4495 to get registered.

AGEC 710 faculty member will be missed

MAB faculty and staff were saddened to learn of the passing of AGEC 710 Instructor Daniel Conforte on February 18, 2012 in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Conforte taught the MERCOSUR module of the course. He was one of the original partners who along with Allen Featherstone, Pavel Sorokin (Russia), Yann Duval (Thailand) and Nicolas Habert (France) developed the Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems course in 2001.

“At Daniel’s encouragement, the course had expanded to cover additional regions in the world and added additional faculty. Through Daniel’s efforts and enthusiasm, this course has reached more than 800 students from around the world. His lectures contained an excellent balance between charts and statistics and storytelling that provided students a feel for the immenseness and importance of the region and his love and passion for his home, Uruguay,” Featherstone said.

He served as head of the department of agribusiness management at Universidad ORT Uruguay, where he taught agribusiness marketing and strategy. His professional interest was in global agribusiness with a focus in South America, farmers’ integration in value chains, and food security. Conforte recently spent several years teaching at Massey University in New Zealand.

In addition to his contributions to AGEC 710, he also hosted the first MAB alumni international agribusiness tour in 2004. Travelers enjoyed seeing Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina from his perspective.

Conforte would have been 57 years old on March 17, 2012. He is survived by his wife, Virginia, and their children, Daniela and Sebastian.

Daniel Conforte, 1955-2012

Daniel's passion and enthusiasm for life and for his profession have inspired each of us to rethink how we teach others. Daniel, you will be missed.

Nate Smith, class of 2011, and his family welcomed Aiden Kendrick Smith to the family on December 27th. Nate also accepted a new position as Territory Finance Manager for John Deere in KS and MO.

Sosthenes Mwansa, class of 2013, has accepted the Senior Credit Officer position with Vision Fund Zambia.

Audra Weber, class of 2012, is moving to Thibodaux, LA where she accepted a position as the Factory Order Fulfillment Manager within John Deere Company.

Ben Smith, class of 2011, welcomed a new baby boy to the world. Liam Gene Smith was born December 13, 2011.

Clair Doan, class of 2009, and family welcomed a new baby on Monday, February 6th. Sophia Elizabeth Sadie Doan weighed 6lbs 9oz and was 20.5 inches long.

Charles Loubersac d’Hotel, class of 2012, and his wife, Marie, had a baby boy, Paul, on November 1st of last year.

Martin Mwansa, class of 2013, and his wife have a new baby girl named Joyce. He now also works as a Provincial Marketing Coordinator for the Luapula region under the Food Reserve Agency.

Michelle Eovovich Adams, class of 2006, is now employed as Production Planner for Pacific Nutritional, Inc. in Vancouver, WA.

Meng Tee, class of 2009, and his wife had a new baby, Jonah on September 29th. He also started a new position within the agriculture industry as a Horticulture Consultant.

Alison Rosenblum, class of 2004, moved within Coffee Bean International and is now the Director of Strategic Account Development.

Leah Suellentrop, class of 2002, had a baby, Betty May Suellentrop, on July 2, 2011.

ISO 9001 is a quality management system. Independent third parties provide certification that a company or production facility has appropriate systems. For example, that they have records training back products and raw materials to their source; that there is a system for feedback from customers; and that new products are appropriately tested.

Charles Loubersac d’Hotel says that the main one has been how different your position is depending on where you are in the supply chain. Having negotiating power allows you to look for synergies and reach interesting agreements.

“I could not have learned it on my own. This kind of negotiating power allows us to set up mutually beneficial arrangements, not just to get the best terms for ourselves.”

At some point, Carlos will want to start his own business again. For now, he feels fortunate to have an interesting and relevant position in Ecuador because the political situation continues to harper development. “The company is doing well and we expect to become even more profitable next year.”

He and his wife Roxana, who teaches grade school, have six children – four girls and two boys ranging from 18 to 4 years of age. They live in Guayaquil, Ecuador. “Everyone is in school, and doing well.”

Calendar of Events

March 18-23
Campus Session

April 3
Deadline to have name appear in commencement program

April 16
AGEC 710, Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems begins

April 27
Final electronic copy of thesis due to graduate school to be spring grad

May 1-3
American Meat Institute Show in Dallas

May 11
K-State spring commencement

June 26-28
Institute of Food Technologists Expo in Las Vegas

August 1-13
MAB Trip to France, Italy, and Switzerland

August 10
Final electronic copy of thesis due to graduate school to be a summer graduate