



# Colorado Agriculture and Rural Leadership

UPDATE

SUMMER 2005



## 2005 Agriculture Outlook Forum; Denver, CO

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The "Ag Forum" was held on Thursday, February 24, 2005 at the Renaissance Denver Hotel with all members of the current CARL class in attendance. Protecting public health and food security were the foundation for this years' seminar. CARL Class II enjoyed a reception the evening prior that was sponsored by McClure & Eggleston, LLC and Summit Farms, Inc. The Thursday session began with a patriotic multimedia presentation by Jeri Matatics Omernik from Rocky Mountain Marketing and Communications. Following remarks by Milan Rewerts, Director of Colorado State University Cooperative Extension and welcome from Don Ament, Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture we enjoyed remarks from Governor Bill Owens.

Steven Wood, President and Chief Economist of Insight Economics in Los Angeles discussed the financial and economic outlook for the United States and Colorado. The highlight of the morning

was an overview of Agro Security: "A National and State Perspective by John Hoffman, Army Colonel (Ret.), and Program Manager, Food and Agriculture Sector, Infrastructure Coordination Division, U. S. Department of Homeland Security. Colonel Hoffman discussed how the agricultural industry is collaborating to improve action plans and pro-

cedures in order to keep agriculture strong and viable. After comments and discussion, a luncheon was held with remarks from Don Ament, and State Senator Jim Isgar with Representative Kathleen Curry, Chairs of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees. Introduction of CARL Class II concluded the lunch by Dr. Heird, Associate Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences and Director of CARL.

Afternoon breakout sessions concluded this full day for CARL participants. Breakout sessions allowed attendees to focus on field crop and post-harvest security; food security; international issues; animal security and water security. CARL participants wish to thank

the committee responsible for the Colorado Agricultural Outlook Forum for an enlightening experience.

*Kerrie B. Badertscher, CPH,  
Extension agent, Horticulture,  
Boulder County*



*Official CARL Class II Photo;  
February 23, 2005  
Denver, Colorado*

cedures in order to keep agriculture strong and viable.

Marc Johnson, Vice Provost for Agriculture and Outreach and Dean for the College of Agriculture at Colorado State University (CSU) discussed the challenges facing CSU in terms

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## *A Look Into Colorado's' Agriculture at the State Level*

Wednesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> proved to be an enlightening day for those of us who were not as familiar with how legislation in Colorado and the nation works. We started off early in a Joint Ag Committee Hearing, with speakers talking about dams in Colorado. Though some terms were over our heads, we were able to follow the presentation and learn a little about Colorado water storage, spill ways, embankments and outlets and the construction and repair that goes into them.

If you don't understand a lot about legislation and how bills are presented, amended, all the readings, voting and politics behind them, then you would really be confused as you sit in the balcony section peering over the ledge while the state senate is in session! After watching and listening to a variety of topics and bills being discussed, we were able to see how each of the Senators were able to share their thoughts and give opinions/expertise, all while sorting through paperwork at their area and seemingly not even listening to what

was going on until the vote was called. Then, each would get a chance to answer 'Aye or Nay' and it was recorded until all had a chance to vote and the bill was sent on, tabled or vetoed.

We were very thankful for Agriculturalist and Lobbyist, Jim Snook, who took the time to meet with us after lunch and explain more of what we had seen on the Senate floor. He shared why lobbyists and Congressmen don't get much sleep from January until May, when everything is in session. And, that many of the bills are being frantically worked on from October to December before they come to the table during session. There are about 700-900 bills each session, and there are about 500 lobbyists who stay involved with the bills that pertain to their interests. There are a lot of politics involved in building trust and relationships with Congressmen. This is really important, because it's a pretty small arena, and one must take extra care to not burn bridges. Success really pertains to your ability to build relationships,

and your word is your commitment. He also mentioned that radicals (on either side of an issue) never get any work done, as it's always denied. Those legislators who are moderate and have some common sense get 95% of the work done.

If you ever have questions – talk to Jim Snook, he is a very informative and knowledgeable man and we appreciate him taking the time to answer our questions and enlighten us on everything from term limits, to voting, to bills, and politics!

*Judi Blum, Career  
Counselor, College of Agricultural  
Sciences,  
Colorado State University*



### **Upcoming Events**

- ◆ *Seminar IV: Regional Agriculture; Steamboat Springs, CO August 25-27, 2005*
- ◆ *Seminar V: Trip to the southeast, state, national and international economy (Louisiana and Mississippi) October 19-23, 2005*
- ◆ *Seminar VI: Agriculture Outlook Forum; Denver, CO February 22-24, 2005*
- ◆ *Seminar VII: National, political and policy involvement; Washington, DC March 23-26, 2006*
- ◆ *Seminar VIII: International Trip; South America September 2006*

## *Safeway Distribution Center; Denver, CO*

On the afternoon of the Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>, we got to see a totally different side of agriculture than most of us are used to in the outdoors sector! We were greeted by Mary Lou Chapman, Rocky Mountain Food Industry Assoc. and Don Grambusch, Director of Distribution, Safeway, Inc. They started off by explaining how the distribution center works, the thousands of square feet

that it covers, the pounds of produce and dollar value of product that they have on site at any one given time – enough to truly make your head spin. Don explained how he schedules the incoming products, maintains quality assurance on produce, and manages price changes and seasonal swings of the product, and keeps the orders in line from each store and also schedules the truckers

to get it out to the chain stores every single day. It was amazing to see how they could arrange such a large amount of both perishable and non-perishable items daily, and that most of the product is brought in and shipped off site to various store locations within a 72 hour period.

On our tour, we covered a lot of ground and saw just about every corner of the ware-

houses, while also being enlightened with facts and figures and interesting tidbits of information from our 'personal tour guides' the entire time. On the tour, we were impressed by the work ethic and direction each staff member had, the pride they took in their work and I've never seen such a clean and organized warehouse in my life! One interesting moment

## *Safeway con't.*

was when they took us into the 'gas chambers', where the very green bananas and other fruit are changed to the perfect color of ripeness before sending them to the retail stores to be the exact right shade for optimum sales. Bananas are really touchy as they have such a short shelf life, and are ordered in from about 5 different locations in the world. It takes careful scheduling to have them come in exactly the right time to be ready to go back out within a few hours and still be fresh, yellow, and ready to sell the second they are set out at the store.

One of the things that impressed us all the most is Don's ability to relate to people, yet still had a full understanding of all the ordering and shipping and maintenance of the entire distribution center. He has developed computer coding systems to make more efficient use of the time and storage of the product and of the over 500 employees that work on site. Don's also developed a computerized program that uses the employees own voice to tell them which aisle and bin certain products are at in the warehouse, giving the employees no excuse that they didn't understand what you told them! But, with Don having such a brilliant mind in all of his management skills – we saw his true colors when we walked through the warehouses and all the employees knew him by name and came to high-five him as he walked by, all waving or saying "hi" to Don... and most impressive, he knew each of them by name. Over 500 employees, and I believe he said that there were just a few that he couldn't call by name.

After our tour, we had a few moments of question and answer time. Mary Lou was able

to share with us more about the legislative issues she battles continually with many different sides of the producers, the wholesale and retail of the products. We had a great discussion about what COOL (County Origin of Labeling) will have as an effect on Safeway, Inc and the rest of the grocery distributors as well. We should be thankful to have Mary Lou on our side, because of the knowledge, passion and heart that she brings to the table for agriculture and production as a whole, and also for the Safeway, Inc. store as well. She has fought many battles on the local, regional, state and national levels to support production agriculture, and we thank her for all her efforts!

*Judi Barbour, Career Counselor,  
College of Agricultural Sciences,  
Colorado State University*



*Above and Right: CARL class members observe the composting process at ACE Compost, LLC.*

*Below: Class members chat during lunch at the Wray Community Center.*



## *Seminar III: Regional Agriculture Northeast Colorado*

The Spring Tour was kicked off Sunday evening on May 15<sup>th</sup> with a wonderful dinner at the Deapollo Restaurant in down town Yuma. This wonderful meal was sponsored by the M&M Co-op. While the class was waiting for dinner they listened to Andrea Anderson with Yuma Economic Development give a brief presentation on their marketing of Yuma, CO. This presentation focused on what Yuma had to offer to create their own unique niche within the Agricultural Market.

Davis Cron, CEO of Yuma M&M Co-op followed Andrea's presentation by explaining the Co-op system and their marketing approach. Mr. Cron focused on Ag commodities and fuels, while briefly elaborating on all the other aspects of a co-op. We were all excited to learn that the Yuma M&M Co-op is actively pursuing the establishment of ethanol pumps within their co-op locations in eastern Colorado.

Dwain Weinrich of Murphy-Brown of Yuma finished up the evening with his presentation on Hog Feeding Operations and their business. Mr. Weinrich discussed the locations and operations of the pig confinements, while expounding on their unique employee/employer relations and the demographics of the employees.

Monday morning we were on our way to Lenz's potato farm, located north of Wray CO. They explained to us how they make their business work by having everyone in the family who wants to be involved in the operation involved, and by focusing on individual strengths. We climbed up the custom made potato harvester and then headed to the shed, where the cleaning and bagging of the potato's occurs. The presentation ended with a question and answer period after the Lenz family filled us up with donuts and juice. The Lenz family was very candid with their answers and questions from and for us, and truly made us feel right at home on the farm.

## *Seminar III Con't.*

From the Lenz's farm we traveled back into Wray to the Wray Community Facility or WRAC. The CARL class was able to tour the facility before lunch which made all of us want to hop in the pool for some fun and relaxation. This establishment was built with grants and money that were either pursued or donated by the community. It was really amazing to see what could be built with the support and effort of everyone in a community no matter the size. Once the tour was over we settled down for a catered lunch with Wray State Bank President, Alan Wilson. Mr. Wilson spoke to us about the rural banking industry and the importance of supporting all of the industries in a small town to help the community and town survive. He stressed the importance of keeping the small town economy alive by purchasing locally.

After lunch the CARL class toured ACE Compost, LLC. courtesy of one of our own CARL members, Roc Rutledge. This was something that the whole class was looking forward to, but not particularly after lunch. Mr. Rutledge explained how the composting of pigs worked from the beginning until the end. The grinder was operating while we were out there and those of us who wanted to, witnessed first hand the combination of the necessary ingredients and the end product that would go into the composting piles. Roc explained the importance of turning the compost piles and showed us the probe that he designed to measure the temperature of the compost pile.

Yuma Milk was our next stop. This is a local dairy operated by the Lungwitz's and Jeremiah

was kind enough to serve as our tour guide. Jeremiah explained the use of the facilities, why pens of animals were split out, how the cooling system worked and how quickly the dairy cows were breed back. From there the CARL class



was able to tour the facility itself from where the milk comes out of the cow, to where it is shipped.

The Yuma Irrigation Research Farm was a very informative tour. Mr. Chris Glaze, Manager, took time out from planting to give us the run down. Chris explained the foundation and history of the Irrigation Research Farm, the purpose, and the educational aspects of it. The Irrigation Research Farm is able to produce quicker test result to all farmers by conducting shorter, sometimes more intensive studies.

Yuma Pest Control District and Manager, Fred Raish was an educational tour. We were able to see new spray trucks loaded with top of the line equipment, and Mr. Raish explained their weed control procedure. Fred also briefly explained the weeds that were currently listed on the state noxious weed list and the propagation of some of the harder to control species.

Tuesday morning, May 17th started with a visit to the Agriculture Research Service Cen-

tral Great Plains station located outside of Akron, CO. Dr. Merle Vigil, Research Leader gave the CARL class a presentation on what the research station did, and then we toured the facility. Dr. Vigil explained the importance of their research and the support that the Ag. Research Service receives from local farmers. One research topic in particular focused on the yield and economic improvement of having a multiple crop rotation as compared to the traditional wheat/



*Above Left and Right: CARL members learn about turf grass production at Graff's Turf Farms in Fort Morgan, CO.*

fallow rotation. Dr. Vigil explained that due to this research there were now very few farmers within the NE CO region that were still using the wheat/fallow rotation.

From there, we traveled to Brush, CO to the High Plains Livestock Exchange LLC and met with Manager, Tim Stutzman. Mr. Stutzman explained the intricacies of a livestock sale while showing us that the barn was also using modern technology via satellite to sell their animals. Now you can sit in the comfort of your living room while buying cattle.

Our next stop was Graff's Turf Farms. This family run busi-

ness in Fort Morgan offered the CARL participants a very different aspect of agriculture. Graff's Turf Farms specializes in custom growing and harvesting. They grow bluegrass, fescues, buffalo grass including mixes and blends. A specialty that we were able to view included a cultivar Reveille that owner Randy Graff felt was a superior, drought tolerant species. CARL participants were able to view harvesting, including the custom sod cutter as well as other specialized equipment. Graff's have provided turf for many venues including but not limited to Invesco Field, Coors Field, and Folsom Field.

The final stop of this day was at Leprino Foods located in Fort Morgan, CO. Kerry Mobley, Manager and Shane Cole, Human Resources Manager

gave us an over view of what the company produces and where all the different plants are located. The plant that we toured made mozzarella cheese for many different food chains and products. We were all outfitted in a lab coat, blue booties, blue hair net, safety glasses, and hard hats. It was truly a unique experience to witness the process of milk turning into cheese. We were able to witness everything from processing of the milk, shredding and packaging of the cheese, to the testing of the cheese, and packaging of the whey.

*Lori Jazwick, District Conservationist, NRCS*

*Kerrie B. Badertscher, CPH, Extension agent, Horticulture, Boulder County*



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If you are an active participant in Colorado agriculture and would like to pledge your support for the Colorado Agriculture and Rural Leadership (CARL) program, please give us a call! We would greatly appreciate your generosity to help continue this great program.

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