

Key Member Retires from FAPC Industry Advisory Committee

By Carrie Leach

STILLWATER, Okla. – Certain Oklahoma food and agricultural industry leaders invest time and bring valuable expertise into the Food & Agricultural Products Center by serving on the center's Industry Advisory Committee.

One of these leaders, Virgil Jurgensmeyer, chief executive officer of J-M Farms in Miami, Okla. and one of the founding members of the FAPC, retired after serving numerous years.

“Virgil’s broad respect as an agricultural producer and a very successful business leader has made him tremendously valuable to the FAPC,” said FAPC Director J. Roy Escoubas. “He believes in value-added processing and what value-added processing can do to expand the Oklahoma economy. Virgil is a tireless supporter of the FAPC.”

Jurgensmeyer is an innovative agricultural business owner of a mushroom production, processing, packaging and shipping facility. J-M Farms, which employs 500 workers and services nine states, has been a successful Oklahoma business since 1979.

“The value that J-M gets out of being involved with the FAPC is that our company is part of a community and state that is thriving,” Jurgensmeyer said. “By having value-added products in our state, the communities grow.”

J-M Farms mushroom products include sliced and whole mushrooms, sliced apples and veggie trays. Jurgensmeyer adds value to these products by slicing and by different package sizing. He also has extended his innovation skills to the conversion of mushroom production waste to a valuable compost and soil enhancer.

“Virgil has become a leader in the mushroom production and processing industry, and he very successfully competes with the major mushroom businesses in the United States.” Escoubas said.

Jurgensmeyer has contributed greatly while serving on the Industry Advisory Committee as an advisor, decision maker, mentor and coach, Escoubas said. He has always been sensitive to the immediate issues and in the long-term planning of the FAPC.

“FAPC is available for producers to help them take their products to the next level, ” Jurgensmeyer said. “Producers need to add value to their products here in Oklahoma instead of elsewhere; this will create a better product for the consumer.”

Under the leadership of Jurgensmeyer, J-M Farms has received many awards for great achievements. In 2004, J-M Farms received the Governor’s Commendation for employing people with disabilities enabling them to succeed.

Jurgensmeyer has received the J.C. Kennedy Award, Citation of Congratulation by the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the Executive Department Proclamation declaring November 18, 1999 as Virgil Jurgensmeyer day.

Jurgensmeyer is active in many community organizations such as Rotary, Tar Creek Advisor Board, Miami Zoning Board, Miami School Enrichment Foundation and Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

He also was a member of the Oklahoma Board of Agriculture for 15 years, and is currently a member of the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association and the National Mushroom Council. Jurgensmeyer was instrumental in writing the by-laws in the development of the National Mushroom Council.

Jurgensmeyer said he did not help with the establishment of the FAPC for recognition. He did it because he believes in Oklahoma.

By having centers such as the FAPC, it allows producers to keep their products produced in Oklahoma, which makes the state stronger, he said.

"I consider Oklahoma to be a vibrant state in business," Jurgensmeyer said. "The state is growing by producing value-added products from within our own state."

The FAPC mission is to discover, develop and deliver value-added products and processing technologies for the food and agricultural industries of Oklahoma. Since inception in 1997, the FAPC has assisted more than 800 Oklahoma businesses with more than 1,000 value-added food and agricultural products, giving rise to more than 100 start up companies in Oklahoma.

###

Oklahoma State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State and Local Government Cooperating. The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or status as a veteran, and is an equal opportunity employer.