

## Long Speaks at FAPC Marketing Workshop

STILLWATER, Okla.—A food broker was one of nine presenters during the Food & Agricultural Products Center's second annual “Real World” Marketing Workshop held recently.

Steve Long, retail service broker with Food Marketing Specialists, spoke to approximately 40 participants regarding food brokers during the workshop.

Long has more than 30 years experience within the food service industries, including owning his own restaurant, being an executive chef and food and beverage director with Sheraton Hotels, a production manager with the Oklahoma State University Student Union and manager of food services for Copper Lake Retirement Center, a division of Deaconess Healthcare Organization.

Food Marketing Specialists is a full spectrum food services brokerage company established in 1985 by Phil LaRue, a veteran food broker for more than 25 years. The business is one of the largest food service brokerage companies within the state, employing 15 people between offices in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Food Marketing Specialists represents more than 30-quality manufacturers ranging from Dole Pineapple to market giants such as Cargill Specialty Meats, Rich Products Corporation, several divisions of Con-Agra Food Services, and Advance Foods of Enid, Okla.

During his presentation, Long discussed the importance of brokers in the food industry. He illustrated the importance of the broker bridging the gaps between the manufacture, distributor, and the restaurants.

“What makes us a value to manufacturers and distributors is our knowledge,” Long said. “Our function is to maximize the product value for companies that hire us. We put a face to the manufacture and their product.”

Long gave an informal presentation that allowed for a lengthy question and answer period. He diagramed the differences between retail and food service brokerage and encouraged participants to learn more about the marketing aspect of the food industry by contacting a brokerage firm.

Long said his company not only works for individual product developers, they have also been hired by distributors who have them train sales staff and take care of customer complaints.

“We are the middlemen and we are instrumental in dealing with the distributors,” Long said. “We know who the decision makers are and we can get things into the distribution system.”

The purpose for the marketing workshop was to help participants address marketing issues such as market identification, market research and market planning, said Jim Brooks, FAPC business planning and marketing specialist and chair of the workshop.

"The fact is a good marketing program is essential to survive and succeed in the highly competitive food-marketing arena," Brooks said. "Marketing is not just radio, television and other advertising. It's not just knocking on doors of prospective buyers and attending trade shows. It's critical for success."

Other speakers during the workshop included Mark Harsha, Harsha & Associates; Bob Johnson, Sysco Food Service; Del Van Horn, Advance Food Company; Vince Orza, Eateries, Inc.; Randy Earhart, Taco Mayo; David Books, Shawnee Milling Co.; Gerald Cockerham, Associated Wholesale Grocers; and Lee Ann Potter, Oklahoma Restaurant Association.

###

Oklahoma State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State and Local Governments 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.