



Robert M. Kerr
Food & Agricultural Products Center

NEWS RELEASE

Adding Value to Oklahoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAPC hosts National Value-Added Ag Conference

Oklahoma City – The Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center hosted the 10th Annual National Value-Added Agriculture Conference June 1-3 at the Sheraton Hotel in Oklahoma City.

“This conference was a national ‘who’s who’ in value-added agriculture,” said Rodney Holcomb, FAPC agribusiness economist and 2008 conference chair. “Those attending the conference were able to experience how value-added programs in other states operate. Additionally, they were able to hear from national leaders what factors will be driving value-added agribusiness ideas in the next few years.”

The conference featured topics such as value-added and economic development provisions proposed in the next Farm Bill and organic labeling regulations and their impacts on niche meat marketers. In addition, participants heard panel presentations from six organizations regarding their value-added programs.

Conference speakers included Ernesto Sirolli, Steve Pelham, Jeff Kistner and David Brooks.

Sirolli is the founder of the Sirolli Institute, an international nonprofit organization that teaches community leaders how to establish and maintain enterprise facilitation projects.

Pelham serves as the USDA rural development director for Alabama and USDA liaison for value-added and rural development provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Kistner is an independent consultant with more than 20 years experience in financing value-added agricultural and renewable energy projects.

Brooks is the regional sales manager of Shawnee Milling Co. and past chair of the Made in Oklahoma Coalition.

Conference participants also had an opportunity to witness hands-on product manufacturing at the FAPC in Stillwater. The demonstrations showcased wood products, juice products, meat snacks and barbecue sauce manufacturing.

“An overwhelming majority of the conference participants enjoyed the demonstrations at the FAPC,” said Chuck Willoughby, FAPC business and marketing relations manager and 2008 conference co-chair. “The panel discussion, including representatives from six different states, also was a conference highlight.”

Conference sponsors included FAPC; FAPC Charles B. Browning Endowed Chair; Market Maker; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry; Oklahoma Department of Commerce; Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives; Oklahoma Farm Bureau; American Farmers & Ranchers; Rural Enterprises Inc.; Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education; University of Kentucky; and Tennessee Center for Profitable Agriculture.

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