

Kansas looks to become pet food hub

By KRISSA WELSHANS

U.S. consumers currently spend \$23 billion on pet food each year, and Kansas garners \$7 billion of that national total.

An integrated program and industry engagement approach at Kansas State University is aiming to bring much more of that share to the state and region.

The university has supported the pet food industry for a number of years, but more recently, these efforts have been bundled and leveraged by Greg Aldrich, research associate professor of grain science and industry. Aldrich joined Kansas State University in 2012 to establish a pet food science program to support the growing industry.

"There's a demand for trained food scientists, animal scientists and feed scientists who understand manufacturing food for companion animals," Aldrich said.

Aldrich knew the pet food industry was hungry for innovation as well as workers, and he realized that the necessary engineering, raw materials and transportation were available in a 200-mile radius around Manhattan, Kan.

He and his students wanted to demonstrate a new pet treat product, so when the Petfood Forum moved to Kansas City, Mo., Aldrich pushed for the forum to offer a hands-on pet treat innovation workshop at Kansas State's Olathe campus.

Since the workshop generated much interest, forum organizers invited the university to collaborate on creating the Petfood Innovation Workshop and the K-State Pet Food Experience.

Nearly 200 attendees gathered in late October to hear eight Kansas State faculty presentations, view 28 student research posters, hear keynote speakers from the Kansas departments of agricul-

ture and commerce and participate in hands-on workshops to make pet treats.

Rebecca Robinson, director of economic development at the Kansas State University Institute for Commercialization, said the workshop was a success.

"At one of the stations, we were making the gummy treat that Aldrich and his students invented," Robinson said. "That demonstration increased the exposure of the technology and gained a lot of interest in the technology, but it also piqued industry participants' interest in Kansas State's capability to innovate."

Aldrich said the meeting brought together researchers, students, industry contacts, innovators and public officials at a town hall-style meeting to discuss how the industry can grow in Kansas.

Kansas secretary of agriculture Jackie McClaskey was among the speakers. She said working with the university to develop the industry is a priority for her agency.

Richard Potter, director of corporate engagement for the university, said the collaboration with the Kansas Department of Agriculture is promising.

"This is a great example of value-added agriculture where Kansas State and the state of Kansas truly excel," Potter said. "We have an opportunity to be the hub for the growing global pet food industry."

Potter said the growth of the industry also presents an opportunity to promote Kansas State's multidisciplinary research strengths.

"The industry encompasses nutrition, sensory analysis, veterinary medicine, animal science, grain science, engineering, marketing, economics, chemistry, biology," he said. "There's room in the sandbox for virtually every college on campus."



PET FOOD HUB: Kansas currently generates \$7 billion of the nation's total pet food sales but is working to increase that market share.

Trent Armbrust, director of business development and strategic initiatives with the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce, has worked with Aldrich, Potter and Robinson from the beginning.

"It's exciting because it brings the private sector and university together," Armbrust said. "When these industry representatives were here, they were also seeing Manhattan, and we were

able to tell them about the assets we have here. They were very impressed with the university and the town."

Aldrich said Kansas State has the chance to become a leader in the field. His sights are set on an innovation center that would include leading-edge equipment and processing as well as advanced animal and analytical laboratory research. ■

USDA's Harden leads sub-Saharan trade mission

LEADERS from five state departments of agriculture and 26 U.S. agribusinesses and trade organizations accompanied U.S. Department of Agriculture deputy secretary Krysta Harden on a mission to sub-Saharan Africa Nov. 16-20 to expand export opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products in that market.

"Sub-Saharan Africa's strong economic outlook, growing middle class and surging demand for consumer-oriented foods creates a promising market for U.S. food and agricultural products," Harden said. "Over the past decade, U.S. agricultural exports to this region increased by more than 50%, totaling \$2.3 billion in 2014."

The top markets in sub-Saharan Africa for U.S. agricultural and related products last year were: Nigeria (\$847 million), Angola (\$298 million) South Africa (\$259 million), Ghana (\$129 million), Kenya (\$69 million) and Ethiopia

(\$83 million).

Participants represented a variety of agricultural products, including grains, feed, peanuts, soybeans, meat and poultry products, agricultural machinery and more. The mission also included leaders from the agriculture departments in Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, North Carolina and Texas.

The delegation met with potential customers from more than a dozen countries across sub-Saharan Africa to forge relationships and learn about the market conditions and business environment in the region. This firsthand intelligence will help them develop strategies to start or expand sales to these key markets, the announcement said.

Among the participants were the American Soybean Assn., USA Poultry & Egg Export Council, U.S. Meat Export Federation, USA Rice Federation, Tyson Foods and Case New Holland Industrial. ■

COOL fix not possible?

• From page 1

THE WTO decision on the retaliation amount is expected to be issued Dec. 7.

In an exclusive interview with *Feedstuffs*, Roberts explained that after four WTO rulings against the U.S., if Congress repeals COOL, there will be "no retaliation, no sanctions, no problem; it's as simple as that."

Earlier this fall, Roberts tried to move a bill similar to legislation in the House that fully repeals COOL — the only action Mexico and Canada consider acceptable to prevent sanctions. However, he said he doesn't have the votes in the Senate Agriculture Committee to support a full repeal.

Roberts said some committee members "think their legislation is an answer," referring to a bill introduced by Senate Agriculture Committee ranking member Debbie Stabenow (D., Mich.) and Sen. John Hoeven (R., N.D.) that would create a voluntary labeling system. Their bill has 16 co-sponsors, five of whom are Republicans.

He referenced a WTO case involving the cotton industry's marketing programs that went through similar turmoil, and in the end, the U.S. had to pay.

Roberts said Canada has made it extremely clear that COOL is a trade in-

fringement and that it will continue to respond aggressively until the U.S. becomes compliant.

Canada's Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay, reiterating newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's position, recently said the Canadian government will uphold the Conservative Party's decision to pursue trade retaliation against the U.S. over COOL.

According to the National Pork Producers Council, in a press interview, MacAulay said of retaliation, "It's not what we want to do, but if we were forced to do it, it's something that we would likely have to do."

Roberts said if WTO approves the requested sanction levels on Dec. 7, those retaliatory tariffs could go into effect as soon as Dec. 18.

He said the Senate could possibly pass something by unanimous consent if needed and added that he's "going to give it several final shots" to get a COOL fix in place yet this year. Roberts said something very dramatic may have to happen, however, before the Senate Agriculture Committee is induced to move.

"It's in limbo right now, and until we can get these people convinced that their legislation is not the answer, we're going to keep moving forward," Roberts said. ■